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Exploring Social Cohesion Among Syrian Refugees in Canada: A Secondary Analysis

Sara Calvert

The University of Western Ontario

Supervisor

Babenko-Mould, Yolanda

The University of Western Ontario Joint Supervisor

Oudshoorn, Abram

The University of Western Ontario

Graduate Program in Nursing

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: As a result of the ongoing crisis in Syria, more than 11 million people have been displaced or killed over the past seven years (Mercy Corps, 2018). Despite efforts by the Canadian government to increase refugee uptake and promote social cohesion, refugees may still face negative resettlement experiences (Galabuzi, 2006; McCoy, Kirova, & Knight, 2016). Exploring how Syrian refugees have experienced social cohesion within their first year in Canada may help to address resettlement needs.

METHODS: This study was a secondary analysis on data collected from the *Housing Education for Syrian Refugees and their Landlords* study, which evaluated the impact of tenant and landlord education on health, housing stability, and social inclusion for Syrian refugees in an urban area in Canada (Oudshoorn, Meyer, & Benbow, unpublished). Qualitative data for the primary study was collected through interviews with Syrian refugees within their first year of resettlement. For this study, a directed content analysis was applied using Jenson's (1998) social cohesion framework, whereby transcripts were examined for themes related to the five dimensions of social cohesion.

RESULTS: Study findings include multiple and interrelated factors that impacted the five dimensions of social cohesion, which include, *belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition* and *legitimacy*. Primary needs expressed by participants included the desire to learn the English language, befriend Canadians, and obtain housing and employment.

CONCLUSION: Findings illustrate the multidimensional nature of social cohesion, as well as highlighting key areas for future policy and program development, and implications for nurses.

Keywords: Syrian refugees, social cohesion, Jenson, resettlement

CO-AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

Sara Calvert completed this work under the supervision of Dr. Abram Oudshoorn and Dr. Yolanda Babenko-Mould, who will be co-authors on publications and presentations produced from this manuscript.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my family and friends who have continually supported my academic endeavors. I would also like to dedicate this work to the Syrian refugees who participated in the *Housing Education for Syrian Refugees and their Landlords: An Evaluation of the Impact on Health* study. It was an honour to read your stories, which have emphasized our obligation as Canadian citizens to promote social cohesion within our communities.

Most importantly, I would like to dedicate this paper to my Papa. Papa was the biggest supporter of my studies, and had he not passed away before the completion of this work, I know he would have been first in line to read it. His curiosity, passion for learning, and integrity are qualities that I strive to embody in my own life. These qualities not only encouraged me to pursue graduate studies, but also contributed to my interest in social justice.

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Over the years, Dr. Babenko-Mould has invested countless hours providing me with knowledge, guidance, and encouragement to pursue my academic goals. Dr. Babenko-Mould first opened my eyes to the option of pursuing a Master's degree back in 2015, at which time I was one of her students in the Rwanda Nursing Practicum. Over the years, the compassion and dedication you have demonstrated within your own practice have helped me to realize my potential within the healthcare field. Words cannot express the gratitude that I have for your continuous support and guidance.

To Dr. Oudshoorn, thank you for igniting my passion for social justice. I am incredibly thankful for your guidance and expertise, as well as the invaluable advice you have provided me throughout this degree. Thank you for sharing your research from the *Housing Education for Syrian Refugees and their Landlords* study with me, without which this study would not have been possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background and Significance

State of Syrian Refugees

The ongoing crisis in Syria has led to the worst humanitarian crisis in recent history (Mercy Corps, 2018). In 2011, protests erupted over government corruption under President Assad's regime. Since then, approximately 1,500 rebel groups—including Al Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)—have begun vying for territorial control in Syria (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015). Protesters have called for democratic reform, but the Syrian government responded with violence, including chlorine gas attacks and bombings over anti-regime areas (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2017). The conflict has been complicated further through NATO, Russia and Iran's attempts to mediate, as well as becoming directly or indirectly engaged in the conflict (UNHCR, 2017).

As a result of the conflict, over half of Syria's population has been forced to leave their homes, and more than 11 million people have been displaced or killed over the past seven years (Mercy Corps, 2018; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], n.d.). While millions remain internally displaced, millions more have fled as refugees to neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, and Iraq (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015). However, there are few formal refugee camps available in these countries and 85% of displaced individuals are forced to live in makeshift dwellings (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015). Furthermore, due to the overwhelming number of refugees, Syria's neighbouring countries have begun to restrict admissions from Syria, leaving hundreds of thousands of individuals stranded (OCHA, n.d.).

Due to the sheer number of displaced Syrians, as well as a lack of refugee camps in neighbouring countries, there are currently 13.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance (OCHA, n.d.) related to this conflict. As a response to the crisis, in 2015 the Government of Canada (GoC) agreed to accept 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February 2016. Canada was able to achieve this goal, and in fact has resettled 50,370 refugees as of November 30, 2017 (Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada, 2017). Of these refugees, the province of Ontario has resettled the largest number of refugees (Government of Canada, 2017). The city of study in this project is the third largest recipient of refugees in the province, and the seventh largest in all of Canada (Bere, 2016). This city has supported 1,360 Government Assisted Refugees, and 625 Private Sponsorship Refugees and refugees through the Blended Visa Office Referred program (Government of Canada, 2017).

Although increased uptake of refugees into Canada may help reduce the number of Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance, these individuals may be faced with discrimination and social exclusion once they arrive (Galabuzi, 2006; McCoy, Kirova, & Knight, 2016; Policy Research Initiative, 2005; Toye, 2007). Furthermore, as Canadian society continues to diversify through immigration, health systems will need to adapt the design and provision of services based on emerging health, cultural and language needs (Squires, 2016). Frontline care providers such as nurses also play a critical role in identifying and addressing the physical, social, and mental health needs of this population (Squires, 2016). Social cohesion is therefore becoming an increasingly relevant area of public policy as an element of successful settlement. According to Banting and Soroka (2012):

The integration of immigrant minorities has surged to the top of the political agenda throughout many contemporary democracies. The potent mix of changing immigration flows, new forms of racial and religious diversity and the heightened politics of security has triggered intense debates about social integration and social cohesion. (p. 156)

Canada is viewed as a diverse and compassionate nation that is actively engaged in humanitarian assistance in the international community (Almontaster & Baumann, 2017), but its decision to increase its uptake of Syrian refugees has been met with some concern. Some of this concern has arisen from lack of trust in governmental ability to manage the flow of refugees in a coordinated manner and facilitate their successful settlement within Canadian society (Papademetrious & Banulescu-Bogdan, 2016). Therefore, acceptance of refugees for humanitarian reasons does not inherently equate to successful resettlement grounded in social cohesion.

Canada's Support for Social Cohesion

Social cohesion is defined as the absence of divisions within a society (United Nations, 2016). A cohesive society promotes a sense of belonging and trust, and fights against exclusion to provide opportunity for growth (United Nations, 2016). Canada's policy community has embraced the concept of social cohesion since the 1960s, at which time the country was attempting to develop a national identity (Woolley, 1998). However, social cohesion was threatened in the 1990s, as a result of the paradigm shift in economic and social policy towards neo-liberalism (Jenson, 1998). Neoliberalism emphasizes individual freedom and privatization of the free market, thereby accommodating international competition (Jenson, 1998). This shift towards neoliberalism created greater social inequality and a strained Canadian social structure,

with rising rates of income inequality and unemployment, intergenerational dependency on social assistance, homelessness, and declining population health (Jenson, 1998). As a result, the Canadian government, policy community, and economists began to address means to promote social change within the nation (Jenson, 1998).

After exploring ways to foster economic development, Canadian economists discovered a positive correlation between measures of economic and social well-being, as well as the economic consequences of social inequalities (Jenson, 1998; Osberg, 1992). Canadian researchers began to examine how social cohesion may positively impact individual well-being, and in-turn increase social capital—which is defined as one’s social connections within their community (Jenson, 2010). In fact, in the early 2000s the GoC began examining social capital and its correlation to social cohesion through a major research initiative, known as the Policy Research Initiative (PRI). The PRI defined social capital as “the networks of social relations that may provide individuals and groups with access to resources and supports” (PRI, 2005, p. 6). These networks develop because of the social determinants of health—such as age, income, and gender—and can impact social cohesion within a society (Jenson, 2010). Research conducted within the PRI (2005), as well as through other Canadian sources, has found that migrant populations are at higher risk of social exclusion and inequality, as evidenced through chronically low incomes—even in the presence of higher levels of education and training—discrimination in employment, housing, education and public services, as well as an overall slow settlement into Canadian society (Galabuzi, 2006; Toye, 2007). In order to improve the social capital of Canadians, the PRI has recommended that policy-makers begin targeting populations who are at risk of social exclusion, such as refugees (PRI, 2005).

Resettlement of Syrian Refugees

Canada's commitment to resettle Syrian refugees arose not only as a humanitarian effort, but also out of political conflict that was occurring within the context of the 2015 Federal election (Garcea, 2016). One of the main foci of the debate was discussing how many Syrian refugees the GoC would be able to commit to resettling, and how quickly the resettlement could be accomplished. The Liberal Party of Canada committed to resettle 25,000 GARs by the end of 2015—which was a much larger election commitment than any other party had made (Garcea, 2016). It has been suggested that this commitment contributed in part to an electoral win for the Liberals, and on November 4, 2015, the new Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau declared that he intended to fulfill the resettlement promise (Government of Canada, 2015). After Prime Minister Trudeau's announcement, many governmental and non-governmental figures voiced concerns surrounding Canada's ability to process and transport such a large number of refugees into the country, as well as the ability of settlement agencies, sponsors, and other services to facilitate resettlement over a short period of time (Garcea, 2016). However, the GoC remained committed to their refugee resettlement promise (Garcea, 2016). Although it took two months longer than initially planned, the GoC was able to achieve their target of resettling 25,000 Syrian refugees. In fact, they have now resettled over 50,000 refugees, more than double their election commitment (Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada, 2017). However, this did not come without further concern from Canadians. Many remained apprehensive about Syrian refugees, some believing that Canada was dedicating too much time and financial resources to Syria—and not enough to citizens of other countries in need of refuge—and others believing that Syrian refugees should not be admitted into Canada at all (Garcea, 2016).

To promote effective coordination of refugee resettlement, in 2015 the GoC developed the *Task Force on Refugee Resettlement*. The Task Force included representatives from large, mid-sized, and small communities within Canada who had hosted Syrian refugees (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2015). The purpose of the Task Force was to facilitate best practice strategies among Canadian municipalities, to coordinate municipal, provincial, and national resettlement efforts, and to work with non-governmental refugee assistance organizations to help increase resettlement capacities (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2015; Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2016b).

| General Actions | Initiatives |
|--|--|
| Create a welcoming environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage government on a national level scale - Involve media - Pass national council resolutions |
| Share information and coordinate services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Engage the community - Centralize information - Coordinate efforts |
| Support front lines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create community partnerships - Consider financial contributions |
| Find safe, affordable, and appropriate housing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop temporary accommodations - Exchange housing information |
| Provide cultural education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide employee training - Share Canadian and refugee cultural information |
| Promote access to community services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Host welcome celebrations - Utilize existing organizations and services to their full scope |
| Create connections and support integration | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organize community events - Offer free tours around the host area - Provide organized classes - Publish community information |

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Advocate for more welcoming communities | - Promote an inclusive environment |
|---|------------------------------------|

Figure 1. Major headings and subheadings of the Welcoming Communities—A Toolkit for Municipal Governments report.

In the fall of 2016, the Task Force released the *Welcoming Communities—A Toolkit for Municipal Governments* report to help guide future resettlement efforts (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2016a; Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2016b). Within this report, eight general actions and associated initiatives were outlined as efforts for municipalities to take to support the successful resettlement of refugees (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2016b). If municipalities were able to follow the guidelines within this report, and governments collaborated on local, provincial, and national levels, there was hope that Canada would promote a welcoming, affordable, and inclusive environment for all newcomers (Garcea, 2016).

Community of Study's Support for Social Cohesion

The mid-sized Canadian city of study in this project is highlighted within the *Welcoming Communities—A Toolkit for Municipal Governments* report as a municipality who supported the uptake of Syrian refugees into their community (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2016b). This city has made a significant effort to create community partnerships in order to sponsor Syrian families. For example, in 2015 a local funder partnered with a settlement agency to support the creation of a program focused on successful settlement for Syrian refugees. This program raises funds to provide a variety of supports for refugees, such as mental health services, native language services, language training, employment services, peer support, as well as other community inclusion programs. The city recognized that an influx of new refugees could place a

strain on social services within the community and took immediate action to invest organizational funds, as well as donor funds into areas of need (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2016b).

In the city of study, there are multiple resettlement agencies who offer a variety of services and supports for newcomers, while also promoting intercultural awareness and understanding. However, for the purpose of this study, one resettlement agency was utilized for recruitment. This particular settlement agency has helped to create connections and support integration of new refugees by partnering with the arts and heritage councils to offer free tours of local museums and historical buildings (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2016b). The settlement agency has also partnered with the municipal government to develop a user-friendly immigration website, which is funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, as well as the municipality. The website provides information about the city and county, as well as links to any immigration resources that one may need. Google translate was also embedded throughout the website to help users read information in their first language. The website also enables individuals to submit immigration questions to a settlement counselor.

Statement of Problem

Although Canada is a nation which has made efforts to promote social cohesion—as evidenced through policy objectives aimed at promoting positive community relations between settled and newcomer communities (Jenson, 1998, Jenson, 2010; Whooley, 1998), its increased accommodation for refugees has transformed into a widely contested political issue (Strategic Comments, 2017). While some concerns related to practical components of the resettlement process, much of the public narrative can be perceived as xenophobic (McCoy, Kirova, & Knight, 2016; Strategic Comments, 2017; Toye, 2007).

As a result, there is growing concern that both targeted and systemic social exclusion of individuals may become a threat to social cohesion and economic prosperity (Toye, 2007).

Social cohesion is also implicated within the health and wellbeing of society. There is increasing evidence that communities with high levels of social cohesion experience better health outcomes, particularly mental health (Stansfeld, 2006). This finding was first identified in the nineteenth century, when Durkheim (1897) identified a positive correlation between social isolation, an element of a lack of social cohesion, and suicide rates. Without having social connections, an individual is at increased risk for various mental health disorders (Stansfeld, 2006).

In order to become a cohesive society, Canadians will have to overcome societal fragmentation and work to reduce inequalities (Putnam, 2007). Gaining an understanding of refugee resettlement experiences in Canada will help to inform health and social providers, as well as influence the development of future policy and program designs to improve social cohesion within our society (Toye, 2007).

Research Question

1. What are the experiences of social cohesion among Syrian refugees who have settled in a mid-sized Canadian city?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative secondary analysis is to explore Syrian refugees' experiences of social cohesion within their first year of resettlement in a mid-sized Canadian city. For this study, Jane Jenson's (1998) social cohesion framework was applied as a means to understand their experiences. This secondary study will be analyzing data from the *Housing Education for Syrian Refugees and their Landlords: An*

Evaluation of the Impact on Health, Housing Stability and Social Inclusion study. The primary study conducted by Oudshoorn, Meyer, and Benbow (unpublished) evaluated the impact of tenant and landlord education on health, housing stability, and social inclusion for Syrian refugees in an urban area in Canada. The qualitative data for the primary study was collected through single interviews with Syrian refugees in a mid-sized Canadian city within their first year of resettlement. This secondary analysis will explore data from interviews for emerging themes related to social cohesion.

Declaration of Self

Due to the experience I have had working with Syrian refugees throughout my nursing career, I have preconceived understandings of the barriers they may face when resettling in Canada. Such barriers may include the language barrier and lack of interpretation services, as well as the provision of services that are culturally insensitive. Given the large number of Syrian refugees who have recently come to Canada, as well as my personal desire to help create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all individuals, I wanted to learn about more about their personal resettlement experiences. Furthermore, I believe that social cohesion is an essential component found within supportive social systems. I believed that utilizing Jenson's (1998) social cohesion framework would help provide insight into the interrelated components of social cohesion, and how they are experienced within a Canadian context. My personal beliefs are congruent with the overall objective of this area of research to help improve the settlement and housing outcomes of Syrian refugees in Canada.

Theoretical Framework

Several definitions of social cohesion exist within the literature (Jenson, 1998). However, while these definitions add variability, there is consensus that social cohesion

is a multidimensional concept (Friedkin, 2004; Jenson, 1998; Rajulton, Ravanera, & Beaujot, 2007; Toye, 2007). Jane Jenson—a Canadian social theorist—has defined social cohesion as “the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity within Canada, based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity among all Canadians” (Jenson, 1998, p. 4). According to Jenson, a socially cohesive society is one where all individuals possess a sense of *belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy* (1998). *Belonging* is defined as one’s perceived acceptance and connectedness within society. Belonging reflects the relations that individuals experience with people, objects, and the social, cultural, and political environment (Youkhana, 2015). A cohesive society is one in which citizens share values and possess a collective identity (Jenson, 1998). Feeling isolated from one’s community is a threat to belonging (Jenson, 1998). Some barriers to belonging include racism and discrimination, as well as negative perceptions toward refugees from members of the host community (Beiser & Hou, 2017; Correa-Velez, Gifford, & Barnett, 2010; Stewart et al., 2008).

Inclusion is defined as promoting equal opportunities for societal participation, particularly for vulnerable populations (United Nations, 2016). This may be achieved through enhancing access to resources, such as income, employment, housing, or healthcare services (United Nations, 2016). Furthermore, promoting inclusion of all members of society is target 10.2 of the *2030 Sustainable Development Goals* (United Nations Association, 2018). An associated threat to inclusion is social exclusion (Jenson, 1998). Social exclusion is defined as “a state in which individuals are unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life, as well as the process leading to and sustaining such a state” (United Nations, 2016, p. 18). Exclusion may

result in feelings of alienation and material deprivation for affected individuals (United Nations, 2016). Throughout time, migration status, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, and gender have been grounds for social exclusion (United Nations, 2016).

Participation refers to exercising political, economic and social rights, while also promoting dignity and providing opportunities and a voice to vulnerable populations (United Nations, 2016). Discrimination, cultural and language barriers are all factors that may prevent refugees from participating within society (Harper & McCourt, 2002; McKeary & Newbold, 2010; Strang, Baillot, and Mignard 2018).

Recognition is defined as the acknowledgment of diversity and respect of differences (Jenson, 1998). Societal recognition evokes a sense of safety, improves feelings of belonging, and encourages participation among vulnerable populations (Spoonley, Peace, Butcher, & O'Neill, 2005). Since the five dimensions of Jenson's (1998) framework are interrelated, many of the factors that may influence recognition—such as failing to recognize foreign credentials, discrimination, or language barriers—may also affect other dimensions (Spoonley et al., 2005).

Legitimacy is defined as having confidence in public institutions such as advocacy groups, political parties, and governments to protect one's rights (Spoonley et al., 2005). A threat to legitimacy is illegitimacy (Jenson, 1998). Refugees may feel illegitimate as a result of systemic obstacles, language barriers, and discrimination (Stewart et al., 2008).

Together, these attributes form the *five dimensions of social cohesion*, which work towards reducing marginalization and promoting the well-being of refugees (Garroway de Coninck & Jutting, 2011; Jenson, 1998). Furthermore, achieving all five dimensions of social cohesion may help refugees to achieve *civic integration*, as defined as the core institutional order of citizenship at a macro-social level (Berman & Phillips, 2004). The

five dimensions are interrelated, and some concepts—such as discrimination—may have an impact on all five dimensions. Jenson's (1998) framework provides a broad, yet comprehensive definition of social cohesion, which is why it has been chosen as a guiding framework for this study.

Methodology

This work is situated within the interpretive paradigm as the focus was to explore participants' subjective experiences of social cohesion. According to Miller and Crabtree (1999), truth is viewed as subjective and dependent on individual experiences within the interpretive paradigm. In particular, the social construction of reality plays an important role in the development of truth (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Given that the purpose of this study was to understand the personal experiences of social cohesion, this secondary analysis situates well within the interpretive paradigm.

Qualitative secondary analysis was applied as a method to investigate new research questions surrounding the experiences of social cohesion among Syrian refugees in a mid-sized Canadian city, using data from the primary study. While the primary work touched peripherally on social cohesion, the focus instead was on housing stability. According to Heaton (2004), the five types of secondary analysis for qualitative research include supra-analysis, supplementary analysis, re-analysis, amplified analysis, and assorted analysis. For this study, a supplementary analysis was applied to explore experiences of social cohesion as found within the pre-existing interview data. As per Heaton (2004), a supplementary analysis is defined as "a more in-depth investigation of an emergent issue or aspect of the data which was not considered more fully addressed in the primary study" (p. 38). Secondary analysis was therefore employed as an adjunct to the primary work (Heaton, 2004).

Conclusion

The ongoing crisis in Syria has resulted in millions of displaced individuals across the globe (Mercy Corps 2018; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, n.d.). Despite Canada's increased uptake of refugees, as well as efforts made to promote social cohesion, incoming refugees may still face negative resettlement experiences when they arrive (Galabuzi, 2006; McCoy, Kirova, & Knight, 2016). Utilizing the findings from this qualitative secondary analysis may help to identify and address the resettlement needs of Syrian refugees in Canada.

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CHAPTER II

MANUSCRIPT

Background and Significance

The ongoing crisis in Syria has led to the worst humanitarian crisis in recent history (Mercy Corps, 2018). As a result of the conflict, over half of Syria's population has been forced to leave their homes, and more than 11 million people have been displaced or killed over the past seven years (Mercy Corps, 2018; United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], n.d.). Due to the sheer number of displaced Syrians, as well as a lack of refugee camps in neighbouring countries, there are currently 13.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance (OCHA, n.d.) due to this conflict. As a response to the crisis, in 2015 the GoC agreed to accept 25,000 Syrian refugees by the end of February 2016. Canada was able to achieve this goal, and in fact has resettled 50,370 refugees as of November 30, 2017 (Immigration, Refugee, and Citizenship Canada, 2017).

Although Canada provides a safer destination for Syrians in need of humanitarian assistance, resettlement is not necessarily free of challenges. Despite efforts to eliminate social inequalities and promote cohesion in Canada, refugees may still face discrimination, social exclusion, and other negative resettlement experiences upon arrival (Galabuzi, 2006; McCoy, Kirova, & Knight, 2016; Policy Research Initiative, 2005; Toye, 2007). As social cohesion has been proposed as a concept that supports successful resettlement, there is a need to understand this concept among refugee populations (Toye, 2007). The purpose of this secondary analysis is to explore Syrian refugees' experiences of social cohesion within their first year of resettlement in a mid-sized Canadian city. Gaining an understanding of refugee resettlement experiences in Canada will help to

influence the development of policy and programs to improve resettlement in Canadian society (Toye, 2007).

Literature Review

To understand Syrian refugees' social relationships within their communities, a literature review was conducted by searching the Scopus online database using the search terms "social cohesion" AND "refugees". Because a directed content analysis approach was applied to understand social cohesion through Jenson's framework, the literature was reviewed for sources containing information on Jenson's (1998) five dimensions—*belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy*. Due to a limited supply of Canadian literature, English articles published in all countries between 2012 and 2018 were included in this review. Additional strategies such as ancestry searching, and a Google search were also used to find further literature. A total of 36 publications were found for this review, 11 from Scopus, 16 from ancestry searching, and nine from Google searching. Of these sources, 32 were research-based, three were organization or government-based websites, and one was a news publication.

Belonging

Belonging is defined as one's perceived acceptance and connectedness within society (Youkhana, 2015). Throughout the literature, being a minority has contributed to feelings of isolation and exclusion among refugees. In a qualitative secondary analysis conducted by Hatoss (2012), it was discovered through analysis of 14 interviews with Sudanese refugee families in Australia that they felt excluded from the host country due to their skin colour, despite their desire to identify as Australian. Similar findings were illustrated in a content analysis of Australian newspaper articles conducted by Nolan, Farquharson, Politoff, and Marjoribanks (2011). In this study, the authors analyzed 203

media representations of Sudanese refugees in Australia and found that they were characterized as “visibly different” from Australia’s hegemonic “white” society (Nolan et al., 2011). In an ethnographic inquiry conducted in Canada, discrimination and racism were root causes of major challenges faced by refugees when they were searching for employment and housing (Stewart et al., 2008). In this study, interviews with 60 different service providers and policy makers, as well as 120 immigrants and refugees revealed unfriendly attitudes and unequal opportunities as themes that reflected racism. Furthermore, discrimination was based upon skin colour, accent, and non-recognition of foreign education credentials (Stewart et al., 2008). Discrimination and racism may jointly contribute to the isolation of refugees, thereby threatening feelings of belonging.

In a discourse analysis conducted by Caxaj and Berman (2010), the authors examined 25 online texts and pre-existing transcripts to connect systemic, cultural, relational, and individual insights into an understanding of how newcomer youths experience belonging (Caxaj & Berman, 2010). The study found that discrimination and various social disadvantages play an important role in one’s level of comfort in social surroundings (Caxaj & Berman, 2010). Other factors, such as family connections, sense of loss, and feeling like they did not fit in with society’s social norms also negatively affected individuals’ feelings of belonging (Caxaj & Berman, 2010). The authors emphasized the importance for nurses to understand how newcomer youths develop a sense of belonging, as it may help to promote understanding of the social context and holistic health needs of this population (Caxaj & Berman, 2010).

Several studies have also explored the relationship between belonging and mental health outcomes (Beiser & Hou, 2017; Celebi, Verkuyten, & Bagci, 2017; Smeekes, Verkuyten, Celebi, Acarturk, & Onkun, 2017). Beiser and Hou (2017) used data from

Statistics Canada's 2013 *General Social Survey* (GSS) to study self-reported mental health of migrants. The GSS is a cross-sectional national representative household study which targets Canadians—including immigrants and refugees—aged 15 and older. By using this data, the authors examined immigration related predictors of mental health, including sociodemographic characteristics, discrimination, acculturation variables, and experiences of reception (Beiser & Hou, 2017). The authors discovered that refugees experienced lower levels of mental health than other migrants. Furthermore, a sense of belonging was a significant predictor of positive mental health (Beiser & Hou, 2017). Various studies of Syrian refugees in Turkey have also found poor mental health outcomes among refugees experiencing isolation (Celebi et al., 2017; Smeekes et al., 2017).

Celebi and colleagues (2017) utilized a risk and resilience framework and motivation identity construction theory to study the moderating role of identity needs in the association between social identification and perceived discrimination with mental and physical health of 361 Syrian refugees in Turkey (Celebi et al., 2017). The mental and physical health of the same Syrian refugee sample was also explored in a path analysis by Smeekes and colleagues (2017). Within these studies, high perceived ethnic discrimination, as well as a perceived lack of identity, were associated with social isolation and poorer mental and physical health outcomes (Celebi et al., 2017; Smeekes et al., 2017).

In a mixed-methods case study conducted by McKoy, Kirova, and Knight (2016), social integration among Canada's Muslim communities was examined through studying the life experiences and sentiments related to belonging of Muslim newcomers. Through the use of Statistics Canada's *Ethnic Diversity Study* (2002), the *Envirionics' Survey of*

Muslims in Canada (2016), as well as through the use of semi-structured interviews with 20 Canadian Muslims key informants—including religious leaders, successful entrepreneurs, and other professionals—the authors were able to identify trends related to belonging (McKoy et al., 2016). Findings indicated that many Canadian Muslims display a strong sense of national belonging and pride, which is due largely in part to Canada’s diverse and multicultural image (McKoy et al., 2016). In fact, this sense of belonging compared favorably to non-Muslims in Canada (McKoy et al., 2016). Fifty-five percent of participants in the *Survey of Muslims in Canada* reported a “very strong” sense of belonging and 39% reported a “generally strong” sense of belonging. Furthermore, 58% of Canadian Muslims from the *Survey of Muslims in Canada* reported a stronger sense of national belonging after five years of living in the country (McKoy et al., 2016). However, interview data revealed that some Canadian Muslims report a lack of belonging in Canada, which was attributed to experiences of discrimination (McKoy et al., 2016). Given the elite composition of interview participants, the authors speculated that experiences with discrimination would be higher among the general Muslim Canadian population (McKoy et al., 2016).

Inclusion

Inclusion is defined as promoting equal opportunities for societal participation, particularly for vulnerable populations (United Nations, 2016). Although Canada has been historically recognized for promoting social inclusion (Almontaster & Baumann, 2017; Banting & Soroka, 2012; Garcea, 2016), Michael Donnelly, of the University of Toronto, contests that there is potential for an increase of intolerant and anti-refugee sentiment. In his study, Donnelly (2017) surveyed 1,522 Canadians about their understanding of and preference for immigration and refugee policy, and compared the

Canadian results against other Western countries. Donnelly (2017) discovered that most Canadians possess “impressive” knowledge of the national immigration and refugee system, and that most study participants were satisfied with Canada’s multiculturalist approach to immigration policy. However, contesting this generally favourable perspective was the finding that the survey participants reported little opposition to the idea of ending all Syrian refugee immigration into Canada (Donnelly, 2017). Although 40% of respondents claimed that they would oppose ending immigration of Syrian refugees into Canada, 36% were impartial to the thought, and 24% actively supported ending Syrian refugee uptake (Donnelly, 2017). Furthermore, over 50% of respondents agreed that refugees and immigrants do not seem to feel connected to Canadian society and believe they should change their ways of being to be consistent with Canadian values (Donnelly, 2017).

Housing has been identified as one of the most significant issues in refugee resettlement due to a variety of issues, including high housing costs (Murdie, 2008), as well as market saturation (Francis, 2010; Francis & Hiebert, 2014). In fact, only 18.7% of Canadian refugees achieve home ownership within four years of arrival (Haan, 2012). Government Assisted Refugees may also experience poorer housing outcomes than refugees who are privately sponsored due to differing financial commitments that are available to the two groups (Sherrell, 2010). Furthermore, race and ethnicity are significant barriers to equal treatment in the Canadian housing market (Danso & Grant, 2000; Darden, 2004; Murdie, 2008; Teixeira, 2008). In 2008, a case analysis study was conducted in Toronto, Ontario on the settlement experiences and housing search processes of three separate immigrant groups from Africa who had recently come to Canada (Teixeira, 2008). Participants included 60 individuals from both the Angolan and

Mozambican communities, and 30 from the Cape Verde Islander group, all of whom responded to questionnaires (Teixeira, 2008). Participants within the study identified racial discrimination as one of their biggest obstacles to housing procurement (Teixeira, 2008). Teixeira conducted an additional case analysis study in 2011 on the housing experience of refugees and immigrants in small and mid-sized cities in British Columbia. Participants ($n=35$) within focus groups for this study voiced similar experiences of discrimination based on country of origin, immigration status, and ethnicity or race (Teixeira, 2011). Discrimination against visible minorities is clearly an obstacle facing refugees coming to Canada who are visible minorities.

Being employed is viewed as a key indicator of inclusion (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015). However, Canadian statistics have indicated that refugees have higher rates of unemployment than those from other migrant categories or Canadian citizens (Galabuzi, 2006; Toye, 2007). This is due to a variety of reasons, such as non-recognition of qualifications, language barriers, and limited access to transportation (Fozdar, 2012; Reitz & Banerjee, 2007). Furthermore, when compared to other newcomer categories, refugees have the average lowest income after four years of living in Canada (Haan, 2012).

Participation

Inclusion has been previously defined as promoting equal opportunities for societal participation (United Nations, 2016). One way to promote an inclusive society is to encourage participation of vulnerable populations. Participation may be promoted through respecting human rights, promoting dignity, and providing opportunities and a voice to these individuals (United Nations, 2016).

In a study conducted by Strang, Baillot, and Mignard (2018), the authors examined refugees' experiences of participation in Glasgow, Scotland. Analysis of data collected from 1885 refugee households for the *Holistic Integration Service*, as well as 13 focus groups and 24 semi-structured interviews with refugees and service providers, indicated that refugees' desire to be independent in their new country was challenged by inaccessible systems that were insensitive to language and cultural barriers (Strang et al., 2018). These findings were further supported through McKeary and Newbold's (2010) discourse analysis of the systemic barriers faced by service providers as well as refugees within Hamilton, Ontario. In their study, the authors conducted 14 semi-structured interviews with professionals—including nurses—in the health and social service fields in Hamilton and found that the city has difficulty trying to provide culturally competent care—as defined as meeting the social, cultural and linguistic needs of patients—as a result of language barriers, as well as isolation and transportation issues (McKeary & Newbold, 2010). In this study, the language barrier posed the largest threat to nursing care. Not only did lack of translation services delay provision of care, when interpreters were available the presence of another person in the room threatened the therapeutic relationship between a nurse and patient due to concerns related to trust, privacy, and confidentiality (McKeary & Newbold, 2010). Language barriers were also identified as an issue related to providing dignified care in a qualitative content analysis of 30 Syrian refugees who were inpatients in a hospital in Turkey (Sevinc, Kilic, Ajghif, Ozturk, & Karadag, 2016). In this study, authors examined the difficulties and expectations of refugees regarding nursing services (Sevinc et al., 2016). The study found that the language barrier made it difficult for healthcare providers to create a safe and supportive environment for refugees to disclose healthcare concerns. Communication errors also

made it difficult for study participants to understand and follow treatment instructions (Sevinc et al., 2016).

McKoy and colleagues' (2016) mixed methods case study, that is described above for its findings related to belonging, also found significant results related to political participation among Muslim Canadians (McKoy et al., 2016). The authors found that voting was not a common practice among this population, which indicated that they are less invested than their non-Muslim counterparts in electoral politics (McKoy et al., 2016). This finding may be related to the fact that the societies Muslims might migrate from are statistically less likely to be democratic (McKoy et al., 2016).

Despite several barriers to participation, Syrian refugees have still found ways to participate in their new society. For example, in January of 2018, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) published an article titled *How Syrian Refugees are Helping Shape Canadian Cuisine*. Prior to Canada's enhanced commitment to resettle Syrian refugees, Syrian food was difficult to find in Toronto. However, since the arrival of refugees, the area has experienced a marked increase in the public availability of Syrian cuisine (Bambury, 2018). The article interviewed the family of a new downtown café and inquired about their decision to join the restaurant business (Bambury, 2018). The family claimed that when their father's engineering credentials were not recognized in Canada, they decided to invest their energy into opening a Syrian eatery as a way to share their cultural traditions with their new city (Bambury, 2018). The family claimed that "it's nice when you bring a piece of home into a new place and share it with other people" (Bambury, 2018, para. 8). Furthermore, Syrian involvement in the food industry has spread beyond large cities. David Sax, food columnist for the New York Times, claims that some Syrian families have settled into small-town Ontario where they actively

participate in summer farmer's markets selling homemade goods (Bambury, 2018).

Another example of how cuisine has encouraged Syrian refugees to exercise their economic and social rights can be seen through a business known as Newcomer Kitchen, a not-for-profit organization in Toronto, which invites Syrian refugee women to cook one meal per week in a restaurant kitchen (Depanneur, n.d.). The meals are then sold online, and proceeds are shared amongst the women (Depanneur, n.d.). Although refugees may face several barriers to participation, some are seizing the opportunity to share their cultural practices with Canada.

Recognition

Recognition is defined as the acknowledgment of diversity and respect of differences (Jenson, 1998). Since the five dimensions of Jenson's (1998) framework are interrelated, many of the factors that may influence recognition—such as failing to recognize foreign credentials, discrimination, or language barriers—have been previously described above (Spoonley et al., 2005). This section will provide insight into media, which is another factor that greatly influences refugee experiences with recognition.

In 2017, a thematic content analysis was published regarding representation of the Syrian refugee crisis in Canadian media. Content from The Globe and Mail, Toronto Star, National Post, Huffington Post, CBC, and CTV on refugee resettlement between September 2015 and April 2016 was analyzed ($n = 388$) (Tyyska, Blower, DeBoer, Kawai, & Walcott, 2017). Results indicated that media portrays the Canadian government and public as generous humanitarians, whereas Syrian refugees lack control over their livelihood and as such, are a vulnerable population in need of support (Tyyska et al., 2017). Although Canadians are described as open to supporting Syrian refugee resettlement, the Canadian media at times utilize a similar 'othering' process well

documented in studies of European media (Tyyska et al., 2017). In all of the media sources analyzed in this study, Canadian citizens, politicians, and other public figures spoke on behalf of refugees, exemplifying a “savior complex” which further marginalizes this population (Tyyska et al., 2017). By portraying Syrian refugees as vulnerable, and not allowing them to voice their opinions directly, the Canadian media has unknowingly depicted this population as helpless (Tyyska et al., 2017). Out of 388 articles and videos that were analyzed, only one did not define refugees as vulnerable and needy. The Toronto Star stated that: “They came out of war, conflicts and atrocities. We need to promote their resilience and offer them proper post migration support. The big message here is resilience, not pathology” (Keung, 2015, para. 13). There is a clear need for the voices of refugees themselves to be better integrated into sharing their experiences of social cohesion.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy is defined as having confidence in public institutions such as advocacy groups, political parties, and governments to protect one’s rights (Spoonley et al., 2005). A threat to legitimacy is illegitimacy (Jenson, 1998). One study was found that explored the types and adequacy of formal supports for refugees in Canada, as well as their perceived needs for social support. This study was the ethnographic inquiry conducted by Stewart and colleagues (2008), which was also mentioned above within the *Belonging* section. In addition to the findings of discrimination and racism that were previously discussed, this study also revealed various findings that explain how refugees may be made to feel illegitimate. This includes language barriers, inadequate information on services and/or poor accessibility, racism, rejection of foreign qualifications, unemployment, social isolation, social insecurity, inadequate social networks, as well as

family conflict (Stewart et al., 2008). There were also systemic obstacles found that contributed to settlement challenges, such as limited mandates, inadequate funding, and gaps in partnership among programs (Stewart et al., 2008). Perhaps the largest obstacle expressed by participants was the difficulty associated with trying to navigate Canadian systems without knowing the language (Stewart et al., 2008). Without such knowledge, refugees may struggle to access services or needed supports (Stewart et al., 2008). Although Canada offers English classes, there may be long wait times, as well as difficulties with transportation (Stewart et al., 2008) or other barriers to access. Participants claimed that when first resettling into a new country, refugees are in the ‘survival stage’ and cannot afford to prioritize learning a language over finding work, housing, and food (Stewart et al., 2008). However, not having the opportunity to learn English significantly contributes to refugees’ lack of confidence in the Canadian system (Stewart et al., 2008). Most participants came to Canada with hopes for a more fulfilling life. However, in this study challenges faced during resettlement caused them to lose faith in the system (Stewart et al., 2008).

In addition to the barriers stated above, a mixed-methods study conducted by Wahoush (2007) found that cultural or social unease may also threaten legitimacy as it is experienced by refugees. Data collected from three focus groups ($n=22$) and semi-structured interviews ($n=33$) of refugee mothers revealed that even if social supports are made readily available to this population, if they are not sensitive to the refugees’ cultural beliefs and norms, then refugee mothers may not feel comfortable accessing such resources (Wahoush, 2007).

Application of Jenson's Framework

Only one study was found within the literature that utilized Jenson's social cohesion framework as a means to understand refugee resettlement. Therefore, a detailed summary of these findings has been provided below. This study found that discrimination/racism, intercultural contact, and the media all interrelatedly affected the five dimensions of Jenson's framework (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015).

In a qualitative study conducted by Dandy and Pe-Pua (2015), the authors conducted interviews throughout Australia to examine factors that enhanced or disrupted social cohesion among refugees. From 54 interviews and focus groups with 138 people—which consisted of both refugees, as well as Indigenous Australians—the authors found several themes that affected refugee settlement. (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015). Discrimination was identified through examples of people being verbally abused, spat at, ignored, or being treated unfairly. Refugees also recounted being told by landlords that they will destroy properties, and had their rent increased due to family size (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015). At times, the media also portrayed refugees as contributing to crime ridden communities, as well as receiving preferential treatment in terms of financial and housing support from the government (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015). Housing discrimination also posed as a barrier to belonging and participation, as having to move frequently prevented refugees from building community relationships (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015). Refugees also explained that it was overwhelming trying to acquire housing and employment, learn a new language, and enrol children in school (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015). However, intercultural contact was identified as a theme that positively affected feelings of belonging, participation, recognition, and inclusion among refugees (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015). Study participants claimed that most of the intercultural contact they experienced

had occurred through interactions with neighbours, English classes, or becoming involved with religious groups (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015). However, some participants expressed their preference to continue speaking their native language and minimally socialize as a result of poor confidence and lack of English knowledge (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015). Because of this some refugees found it difficult to interact with their new communities (Dandy & Pe-Pua, 2015).

The literature has identified several factors that may impact the success of refugee resettlement in their new country. Although these factors are likely to relate to one another, little research has been conducted exploring these factors through a defined theory or framework. Given that Jenson's (1998) framework examines the interrelated impact of five factors on social cohesion, it was an appropriate theoretical lens to utilize for this study.

Ethical Approval

The University of Western Ontario's research ethics board for Health Sciences Research Involving Human Subjects granted approval for the primary study (see Appendix A). During the consent process, participants were given a letter of consent (see Appendix B), which outlined the purpose of the study, as well as their rights as participants. At this time, prospective consent was also obtained to use participant data for future secondary analyses. Electronic data was stored on a password-protected computer that was accessible by only the primary researcher and research staff. Hard copies of data were stored in a locked filing cabinet at Western University. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were assigned an identification code.

Methodology

This work is situated within the interpretive paradigm as the focus was to explore

participants' subjective experiences of social cohesion. According to Miller and Crabtree (1999), within the interpretive paradigm truth is viewed as subjective and dependent on individual perspectives. In particular, the social construction of reality plays an important role in the development of truth (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Given that the purpose of this study was to understand the personal experiences of social cohesion, this secondary analysis situates well within the interpretive paradigm.

Qualitative secondary analysis was used to examine data from the primary study. According to Heaton (2004), secondary analysis may be used as a methodology to conduct free-standing studies with pre-existing data. Prior to the 1990s, secondary analysis was primarily used as a means to analyze quantitative data. However, since the mid-1990s several publications have been developed applying secondary analysis of qualitative data (Hinds, Vogel, & Clarke-Steffen, 1997; Mauthner, Parry, & Backett-Milburn, 1998; Thorne, 1994). Secondary analysis is most often performed on non-naturalistic data, such as field notes, observational records, interviews, focus groups, or diaries (Heaton, 2004).

There are three purposes of secondary analysis, which include investigating new research questions, verifying, refuting and refining existing research, or synthesizing research (Heaton, 2004). For the purpose of this study, qualitative secondary analysis was applied as a method to investigate new research questions surrounding the experiences of social cohesion among Syrian refugees in a mid-sized Canadian city, using data from the primary study. While the primary research touched peripherally on social cohesion, the focus of that work was on housing stability.

According to Heaton (2004), the five types of secondary analysis for qualitative research include supra analysis, supplementary analysis, re-analysis, amplified analysis,

and assorted analysis. For this study, a supplementary analysis was applied to explore experiences of social cohesion as found within the pre-existing interview data. As per Heaton (2004), a supplementary analysis is defined as "a more in-depth investigation of an emergent issue or aspect of the data which was not considered more fully addressed in the primary study" (p. 38). This mode of analysis was chosen as the focus was a more in-depth understanding of the data that emerged as a post hoc topic of interest (Heaton, 2004). However, it is important to acknowledge a potential implication of this type of analysis. Since supplementary analysis simply extends the findings of the original study, researchers may find their findings are duplicated within the primary and secondary analysis findings (Heaton, 2004). Regardless of this potential implication, since the research question for this study arose from the findings in the primary analysis, the same data-set needed to be re-used to explore aspects of the data that were not uncovered in the original study (Heaton, 2004). Secondary analysis was therefore employed as an adjunct to the primary work (Heaton, 2004).

Study Design

To conduct this supplementary analysis, interview data from the primary study was analyzed. The primary study, using a mixed methods approach, evaluated the impact of tenant and landlord education on self-rated health, housing stability, and social inclusion for government-assisted Syrian refugees in an urban area in Canada. The variables were studied quantitatively through analysis of GAR Client Support Services (CSS) structured assessments. The CSS at the settlement agency performs structured assessments on all GARs at arrival, four months, eight months, and 12 months post settlement. Additionally, qualitative interviews were performed to provide added context to quantitative findings and to assess for any additional findings which may not have

been captured quantitatively, within one year of refugee resettlement. Interviews were particularly conducted with GARs who scored either high or low on the housing measures of interest, as well as those who did and did not participate in housing education sessions. The four sub-groups that were identified for qualitative interviews included: High scoring/did education; high scoring/did not do education; low scoring/did education; and low scoring/did not do education. In all, 17 interviews were conducted with Syrian refugees as individuals or families.

In the primary study, data analysis from the individual interviews revealed several themes relating to health, housing stability, and social inclusion. While social cohesion was noted as a way to understand social inclusion for newcomers in the primary study, no further analysis on this particular concept was conducted. Rather, in-depth analysis focused on tensions around gratitude, challenges in developing Canadian connections, making sacrifices for the family, and being under-housed, not by choice. Within the thematic area looking at developing Canadian connections, this issue of social cohesion was identified, as participants struck the balance between integration in local Syrian communities and fitting in with a broader Canadian culture. Therefore, a supplementary secondary analysis was applied to further explore the concept of social cohesion among Syrian refugees within their first year of resettlement in a mid-sized Canadian city.

Sample and Sampling Method

Purposive sampling was used to recruit participants for the primary study using results from the structured assessments mandated by Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada. Refugees were eligible to enroll in the study if they scored high or low on the health and housing measures of interest in the assessment, and whether they did or did not participate in tenant and landlord education sessions. The four subgroups of

eligible participants included those who scored high and did the education, scored high and did not do the education, scored low and did the education, and scored low and did not do the education. Individuals were also eligible if they migrated originally from Syria and came to Canada as GARs with the settlement agency during the November 2015-February 2016 intake period. All families who participated in the interviews were Arabic speaking, Muslim, had formerly been employed in Syria, and had children from infant to young adults. During interviews, fathers spoke for the majority of the time. However, there were times when mothers would periodically contribute as well. The children were often present during interviews but did not participate. As previously described, a professional interpreter was utilized for all interviews. The only exclusion criteria for this study were families who were currently in a crisis, which was defined as refugees who were accessing crisis services through the referring agency. A total of 17 families were interviewed for the study. Interviews were conducted during the summer of 2017.

Data Collection

As previously described, potential participants for the qualitative interviews were identified based on their CSS scoring. Once potential participants were identified, a request with recruitment letter was forwarded to Citizenship and Immigration Canada with a participant ID. Citizenship and Immigration Canada then forwarded recruitment letters to the settlement agency, who then provided recruitment letters to the individual participants. If potential participants chose to make contact with the researchers, they were then provided in person with the Letter of Information and Consent for the study (see Appendix A). Once the Letter of Information and Consent was signed and returned at the outset of the interview, participants provided qualitative data through a one-time, semi-structured interview that was conducted in an area of their choosing. Interviews

were audio-recorded with consent and lasted on average 45 minutes. A professional transcriptionist transcribed the English conversation of the interviewer and interpreter verbatim. For this secondary analysis, data from all 17 of the qualitative interviews were analyzed.

Data Analysis

According to Heaton (2004), there are various methods of qualitative secondary analysis. For the purpose of this study, directed content analysis was utilized as an analysis technique to code and analyze interview data. Transcripts from interviews were examined for themes related to the five dimensions of social cohesion (Heaton, 2004). Although fieldnotes were also available, they were excluded from the data analysis in order to focus on the subjective experiences of participants, not observations from researchers. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), there are three approaches to content analysis: conventional, directed, or summative. All three approaches may be used by qualitative researchers within the interpretive paradigm to uncover meaning from data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In conventional content analysis, codes are derived directly from transcripts. In a directed approach, a theory or framework is used as a guide to develop a coding scheme. In summative content analysis, keywords are counted and compared (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The major differences that exist between the three approaches are coding schemes, the origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Because Jenson's social cohesion framework was pre-identified as a means to understand experiences of participants with social cohesion, a directed content analysis was applied (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), qualitative researchers may choose to apply a directed approach to content analysis if an

existing theory or framework is known related to the concept of interest. The purpose of directed content analysis is to validate or extend a theoretical framework (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Since researchers are able to use an existing theory to guide analysis, an initial coding scheme may be developed *a priori* through identification of key concepts within the theory (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). For this study, the coding scheme was developed surrounding the five dimensions of Jenson's framework—*belonging*, *inclusion*, *participation*, *recognition*, and *legitimacy* (Jenson, 1998). However, as the analysis proceeded, the initial coding scheme was revised based on the contextual meaning of content within the transcripts. Directed content analysis is therefore referred to as both a deductive and inductive process (Mayring, 2000).

According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005), there are two types of directed content analysis. If the goal of the research were to identify and categorize all aspects of a certain phenomenon, then researchers would benefit from reading a transcript and highlighting all text that appears to represent pre-determined codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). After transcripts are read, highlighted passages are coded to the pre-determined codes. Any text that is not categorized within the initial coding scheme would be assigned a new code (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This strategy may increase trustworthiness of results—which is defined as the degree of confidence a researcher has in the accuracy of their analysis—as the data is highlighted before it is coded (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The second analysis strategy is to begin coding transcripts immediately after pre-determined codes are developed. Data that cannot be coded may be identified and analyzed later to determine if they represent a new code, or a subcategory of a pre-existing code (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). If a researcher feels confident that immediate coding will not bias the identification of relevant passages, then one may choose to begin coding immediately

(Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Within both analysis strategies, researchers may choose to develop sub-categories for codes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In order to promote trustworthiness of findings, the first analysis strategy of highlighting and then coding to pre-determined codes was used for this secondary analysis. Utilizing this strategy promoted maximum coding potential and ensured findings were not excluded due to their inability to match with pre-determined codes. Furthermore, highlighting passages first helped me to accurately code my data and monitor bias within my analysis, thereby increasing the trustworthiness of my findings. Definitions for each code, subcategory, and category were developed and recorded in a codebook.

Approaches to Creating Authenticity

According to Heaton (2004), there are various strategies that researchers may use to achieve methodological rigour in secondary analysis, one of which is triangulation. Investigator triangulation may be accomplished if the secondary researcher consults with the primary researchers who collected the data, or other colleagues for validation of emerging codes (Szabo & Strang, 1997). For this study, I consulted with both of my supervisors, one of whom was a primary researcher on the original study, and the other who was not involved with the original study. Consulting with both an original researcher, as well as a colleague who is unfamiliar with the original study has helped to ensure the rigour of my secondary analysis (Heaton, 2004).

Another strategy that was applied was keeping an audit trail throughout the secondary analysis process. Audit trails are detailed records of the research process, which allow the rigour and trustworthiness of an analysis to be checked by independent auditors (Heaton, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this secondary analysis, an audit trail was used to record all research decisions, including analysis activity. As previously

mentioned, a codebook was used as a means to monitor emerging codes via inclusion and exclusion criteria, in order to support the accuracy of study findings (Heaton, 2004). Each step of coding and feedback from supervisors was saved for potential audit.

To monitor my personal perspectives when analyzing the data, I also kept a reflective journal. According to Polit and Beck (2016), journals may be used to record personal thoughts on the impact of life experiences and personal beliefs on the phenomenon being studied. When I self-interrogated and critically reflected, it helped me to understand the experience of social cohesion through the lens of the participants. For example, when first reading interview transcripts, I found myself comparing the resettlement experiences of participants in this study to the experiences that refugees had within the articles described in my literature review. However, once I reflected in my journaling that I was comparing experiences, I re-read the affected passage, reminding myself that the experience was unique, and could not be classified as the ‘same’ experience that was described from another study.

Findings

Within this secondary study, the five dimensions of Jenson’s framework—*belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy* (Jenson, 1998), were applied as a means to understand participant experiences. Study findings were themed within these five dimensions to understand the constructs that make up the dimensions. The following section outlines the study findings as they relate to the five dimensions of social cohesion.

| Dimension of Social Cohesion | Constructs of the Dimension |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Belonging | Desire to Integrate |
| | Discrimination |
| | Perceived Safety |
| | Language Barriers |

| | |
|---------------|----------------------------------|
| | Canada as ‘Home’ |
| Inclusion | Organized Integration Activities |
| | Income and Employment Barriers |
| | Housing Adequacy |
| | Education |
| | Health Access |
| Participation | Choice of Housing |
| | Empowered to Speak |
| | Able to be Heard |
| | Community Involvement |
| Recognition | Respect and Tolerance |
| Legitimacy | Systemic Obstacles |
| | Canadian Law and Government |

Belonging

According to Youkhana (2015), belonging is defined as one’s perceived acceptance and connectedness within society. Belonging reflects the relations that individuals experience with people, objects, and the social, cultural, and political environment (Youkhana, 2015). Feeling isolated from one’s community is a threat to belonging (Jenson, 1998). Throughout the interviews, feelings of belonging—or lack there-of—were frequently referenced through discussion of participants’ desire to integrate into Canada, their ability to develop friendships, experiences with discrimination, feeling safe, settled, and/or connected within their community, as well as the impact of language barriers. Participants also discussed the extent to which Canada felt like ‘home’.

As previously mentioned in this paper, certain concepts may impact multiple dimensions of social cohesion. Language barriers and discrimination are two concepts that affect all five dimensions, and as such, will only be discussed in this portion of the findings.

Desire to integrate. Participants expressed a desire to integrate into Canada when asked about their experience with workshops that were provided to refugees upon their settlement. Various participants exclaimed that the workshops were helpful in teaching them about Canadian culture and ways of living. For example, one participant claimed, “in the end, we would like to be integrated with the Canadian community, so the more we attend these lectures, the more we educate about the Canadian culture.” Although most respondents claimed that newcomer workshops were helpful, one family explained that not being able to speak English posed as a significant barrier to integration. Other participants expressed a desire to befriend Canadians as “Canadian people learn them the Canadian culture better than school, the school they only learn English, so the Canadian friends learn them the Canadian culture as well as English.”

Participants expressed a desire for Canadian friendship not only to learn about local culture, but also to prevent isolation. Several participants claimed to have developed friendships with fellow Syrian refugees, as well as Canadian neighbors or individuals they meet through school. When asked about coping mechanisms, one participant claimed that having friends to rely on helps to decrease the stresses associated with relocating to a foreign country. Overall, participants claimed to be grateful for their Canadian friendships, or expressed a desire to attain them. For example, one participant stated, “I wish one day that we can have Canadian friends, family, Canadian family, friends, but until now we don't have. I wish. This is my hope.” In reference to the researchers visiting participants to conduct the study interviews, an individual exclaimed, “...once you called me, I was very happy that someone come and visit. This is the first time. Now we feel like we are in Canada.”

Discrimination. When asked about discrimination, 14 of 17 participants stated that they have not experienced discrimination since arriving in Canada. One participant exclaimed, “The Canadian neighbor are the best. This is true, they...smile to your face, they are very welcome, they are very kind.” Another participant claimed that Canadians “see that you are a human being, you have your own dignity. We saw here that things we never saw it in our own country. Good things we never saw.”

The negative experiences with discrimination occurred in relation to interactions with participants’ landlords or social service workers. One participant claimed that their landlord was particularly rude to Syrian families in their apartment building, but kind to Canadian families. When they attempted to communicate to their landlord—perhaps by saying hello or good morning—the landlord would ignore them. The landlord would also ignore complaints that the participant’s family would file against their unit. Another participant described their social service workers as being “in a gang” as they were not helpful and told the participant to simply be happy with what they were given. A third participant disliked both the landlord and their social service workers, claiming that they could not trust either party. They further explained that the landlord is “sneaky” and “discriminates against Syrian people.”

Perceived safety. Sixteen participants claimed that they felt safe in Canada. When asked the best part of coming to Canada, one participant exclaimed, “first of all, the safety, we feel safe here.” Only one negative experience with safety was noted within the interviews, and this was found within a participant’s discussion surrounding the Salvation Army. When asked if they accessed services such as food banks, one participant exclaimed:

[Interviewee]: We just went one time but we never go there again...but we are scared they took us or something.

[Researcher]: So, they're scared to use the service-

[Interpreter]: Because the Salvation Army, you know, it's military sounding-

[Researcher]: The name.

[Interpreter]: Yes.

Language barriers. There are several factors that contributed to participants' experience of belonging in this study. However, perhaps the most significant barrier to feelings of belonging is the language barrier that refugees face upon arrival to Canada. Every participant claimed that the language barrier has made it harder to integrate. When asked if one year was enough time to get settled and learn English, a participant exclaimed, "the main issue is the language and to have a job here I should have the language otherwise I can't have a job." Although they are taking English classes, many expressed that they are learning too slowly, and fear that it will limit their ability to prosper in their new country. For example, one participant exclaimed, "I attend all my classes, I never be absent because whenever I went anyplace, I don't understand English, I get confused and I feel very bad, so I feel encouraged to learn." However, many participants also expressed joy when discussing their children's ability to learn English quickly in school. Participants in this study therefore seemed pleased with their children's' progress, but when discussing their own English learning, became worried that the language barrier will prevent them from obtaining employment and subsequently hinder their ability to obtain adequate housing and achieve financial independence.

Canada as 'home'. Ultimately, the clearest indicator of belonging was whether participants felt that Canada had become or could become 'home'. Overall, the majority

of participants stated that Canada does—or will—feel like home and they are happy to be here. One participant exclaimed, “even if everything’s settled in Syria, we will never go back. This is our country. This is our home. We will never go back again.” However, not all participants shared the same sentiment. For example, one participant recalls crying out “I do not want to go there, don't make me go there” but was told they were not going to find anywhere better. Another participant exclaimed that their housing manager, of whom they referred to as a dictator like Saddam Hussein in her approach to human interaction, has tainted their perception of Canada. Two other participants claimed that they would have preferred to stay in Turkey—their previous country of refuge—because there were large Syrian and Muslim populations there and in Canada “the housing is small and we don't get enough money.” Several participants also explained that although they may miss Syria, they would stay in Canada for the health and safety of their children. One participant stated, “Canada is the word, so you are safe here and everything so the kids are well covered from everything, health, education, so if you would like to have life for your kids, come here to Canada.”

Many participants also experienced homesickness, claiming that missing family members was a large source of stress. Participants were feeling homesick despite the new connections they were making in Canada:

So, although I am chatting or laughing with others, but I’m still having a pain in my heart thinking of my parents, missing them, although I am laughing in front of people but I am still have tears inside my heart.

Other participants explained that although they feel happy in Canada, they would return to Syria one day if it meant reuniting their extended family. One participant claimed, “If I

lost hope, I will go back because they don't have anyone else except me and my brother, so I will go back home if I lost the hope in bringing them here.”

In addition to feeling homesick, one participant described feeling as if they were “between two fires” when asked about whether or not they feel at home in Canada, and whether they regret their decision to come here. This participant explained the need to balance integration with maintaining their social and cultural connections with Syria. Although only two participants expressed a direct tension between integrating and maintaining cultural connections, several participants expressed a desire to befriend both Syrian and Canadian people in order to maintain their cultural connections, as well as learn English, Canadian culture, and gain social capital in their new country. One participant shared that much of the tension arises from being separated from family:

[Researcher]: Do you think that Canada will ever feel like home to you or will your heart always be kind of with Syria?

[Interpreter]: So, my feeling is still with them, but it's my, it's always my country, but as you know, I'm still connected with them.

[Researcher]: Yea, so one of the most difficult questions then is if you could go back a couple of years, would you come or would you stay?

[Interpreter]: You mean if she go back to Lebanon?

[Researcher]: So, if you could turn back time.

[Interpreter]: Ah, okay.

[Researcher]: Would you make the same choice and come or would you stay?

[Interpreter]: Oh, so if this happen, I will try to put my parents with me the same time for immigration application.

Inclusion

According to the United Nations (2016), inclusion is defined as promoting equal opportunities for societal participation, particularly for vulnerable populations, through enhancing access to resources. When individuals are unable to participate, they are at risk for social exclusion (Jenson, 1998). Throughout the study interviews, participants identified participation through their access to refugee workshops, income, employment, housing, education, and healthcare services, but also barriers to participation when these determinants of health were insufficient.

Organized integration activities. Workshops organized by settlement agencies served as a means of information sharing and opening the door to participation. All but one of the study participants claimed they were able to attend workshops hosted by various organizations. All the participants stated that the workshops were useful in helping them to understand Canada and learn how to access services—as was previously mentioned in the belonging section. One participant stated,

For me the program [covered] mostly all topics. I don't think we need to add more because it would be very boring for us and so they cover all the topics and if we have a question we can chat, discuss with the speaker about our concern of the specific. So, they educate—they learn us everything. Learn where is the grocery market, where is the Arabic grocer market, where to buy the bread, where to buy everything. So, we learn everything.

Only one participant expressed disappointment in the workshops, because they claimed they were not invited. A suggestion was made that workshops be offered to refugees upon arrival to Canada, not six months after settlement—which is what happened to a few participants. These particular participants attended a workshop on

tenant and landlord rights once they had already settled into an apartment and stated that it would have been useful to receive this information earlier.

Income and employment barriers. While income can support participation, lack of adequate income can be a significant barrier. Many participants described financial problems that have arisen trying to live off the monthly salary that their financial assistance program provides. Many families expressed that it was not enough money, and without a job, they did not foresee their quality of life to improve in the near future. In one interview, a couple was quick to inform the researcher that the husband was previously a lawyer in Syria and the wife was previously a teacher; their inability to find work dramatically impacted their view of Canada and their re-settlement in this country. Although many expressed intent to obtain employment, the language barrier posed as their largest threat—as was previously discussed in the belonging section. In regards to the financial assistance program, this will be described later as a legitimacy issue.

Housing adequacy. Similar to income insufficiency, housing challenges served as a barrier to inclusion. Some participants complained of issues within their rental units. Some of these issues included flooding, wheelchair accessibility, cockroaches, and bedbugs. One tenant even compared their housing to a refugee camp, with water coming through the roof. This participant repeatedly exclaimed, “this is not only us, there’s other tenants, but it’s how we were treated and the lack of timely response.” In addition to these issues, participants also discussed the small size of their apartments. In this study, all participants were given two-bedroom apartments, regardless of family size. Many participants stated that they had multiple children of mixed age and sex sharing one bedroom. One family also described waiting in line for the washroom in the morning as

being “like a prison.” Participants who were living with the above issues were systematically provided inadequate housing.

For some participants, housing issues and poor treatment from their landlords served as motivation to move elsewhere. However, the expensive housing market posed another barrier, preventing participants from achieving adequate housing. In fact, one participant exclaimed, “the most challenge we face is the housing is very expensive.” Many stated that although they would like to move to a larger apartment, perhaps in a nicer neighborhood, they could not afford to leave. One family exclaimed that their ultimate dream was to improve their housing through finding employment. But again, the language barrier is preventing them from doing so.

Education. Participants were proud to discuss their children’s progress in school—in regards to their ability to learn English, make friends, and attain good grades. When discussing their own English classes, however, they were not as pleased. When asked about how they find English classes, one participant exclaimed, “It’s okay but it’s too slow...to greet and to communicate with the community, learn—learns us faster in school.” This quote connects to participants’ desire to belong in Canada. Participants are grateful to be receiving English classes, but would like to learn faster in order to integrate into their new community. Furthermore, one participant exclaimed that 18 families that they knew had boycotted their particular English school because they were unhappy with the quality of their education. They recalled learners of different English levels being combined into the same class so some were learning too slowly, and others were finding it too advanced. Another participant expressed, “I get scared that if I get older I can’t learn as like now.” Although most participants claimed they were participating in English

classes, a few—mostly female—participants explained that they did not have time to learn English due to their family obligations.

In addition to having access to education, one participant also exclaimed that they have a school employee who helps them register their children in extracurricular activities while also finding reimbursement options—such as Jump Start—to help offset the financial cost.

Health access. All study participants claimed to have access to a family physician. One participant exclaimed, “the healthcare is very good for us, whenever I feel pain or something I just call the physician and she give me an appointment.” However, some participants did express that there are long wait times for appointments here in Canada. For example, one participant exclaimed,

It tooks longer time here to be treated. I have osteoporosis. I have neck pain and they took a long time to make x-ray for me or examination for me...so, since I came—since six months they just—I just saw the physician since six months ago.

In addition to the long wait times for tests, participants are also receiving minimal mental health support. One participant regularly sees a psychiatrist for PTSD, but only receives an appointment every one to one-and-a-half months. Another participant explained that their eldest son, who is 27 years old, suffers from depression—to the point where the mother is scared to leave the home out of fear that the son will attempt suicide. The family has tried to reach out to their social service worker, as well as various resource centers, but they are either told to wait, or met with no reply at all. Long wait times for healthcare services are not an issue that is isolated to refugees (Barua, 2017). While in Canada refugees are covered under the Interim Federal Health Program, which was designed to provide access to physical and mental healthcare services (Abdihalim,

2016; Government of Canada, 2018), this does not solve barriers to timely access to tests and services that exclude participants from achieving their optimal level of health and well-being.

Participation

Participation may be promoted through respecting human rights and providing a voice and empowerment to vulnerable populations (United Nations, 2016). Participants in this study identified several ways in which they have—or have not—participated in their new country, which will be subsequently described.

Choice of housing. In addition to housing adequacy mentioned above as an element of inclusion, choice of housing, including choice to locate within existing cultural communities, is an element of participation. In this study, choice was a negative as it was generally lacking for this group of Syrian refugees. Participants were not able to choose which country they moved to, as government made this decision. The majority of participants also explained that they did not have a choice on where they were to live once they arrived in Canada, as they were required to sign an apartment lease without seeing the unit. One participant stated that they used to work in real estate in Egypt, and that they would never be asked to sign an apartment unseen, but rather the whole family would come and observe the space first. One participant was wheelchair bound but living in an inaccessible unit. In fact, this participant was not able to fit their wheelchair inside the washroom. However, when they voiced their concern, the family was told that it was the only available apartment.

Of those participants who did have a choice on housing, they did not have a positive experience. One participant exclaimed that they had a choice between “a prison or an apartment that we didn't like and that wasn't big enough, so what are you going to

choose”, he said, “of course we will choose the apartment from the prison.” Not having a choice on where to live, as well as not being able to receive accessible housing stripped participants of their voices and rights to safe housing.

Empowered to speak. Participants demonstrated empowerment through voicing concerns about school and housing issues. One participant exclaimed that in his English school, 18 families boycotted their education because they were unhappy with the quality of the curriculum. Other participants stated that they made verbal requests to their landlords regarding various housing issues. Other participants reached out to their social service workers to help provide direction and support for filing housing complaints.

Although some participants claimed to be comfortable speaking to their landlords, most would cease to take further action if the landlord ignored their verbal request. Two different participants exclaimed that they did not put their requests in writing because they were afraid to be assertive due to the fact that they were “strangers in this country” and they did not want to “create problems.” Another participant explained that they contacted their social service workers multiple times to help them navigate such conversations with their landlords but did not receive any help. Other participants stated that they were unsure of how to address issues with one stating, “I didn't know that I should persist contact with the landlord” while another insisted, “It was very hard to have this water issues and we don't know what to do, who to contact or these things.” Yet another participant asked the researcher during their interview if he could talk to the landlord on their behalf. Being afraid to follow up on requests, not knowing how to address housing issues when the landlord ignores verbal requests, as well as receiving inadequate guidance from their social service workers all acted to disempower the participants.

Able to be heard. While participants might have concerns, if interpretation was unavailable, there was a clear barrier to expressing these concerns. Participants stated that Arabic translators were available within their children's schools to help support their learning. One participant stated, "even if there's no Arabic-speaking person, by sign language they can understand what we need. They do everything for us." Outside of school, one participant explained that they had an interpreter present during a job interview. Another participant explained that they utilize friends or their children to communicate with neighbors. Providing translation services helped to promote empowerment and give a voice to refugees, by promoting effective communication channels.

Community involvement. Participants also empowered themselves through becoming involved in their community. One participant stated, "although we are not happy with this apartment, we are not waiting for someone to fix this situation for us, we should fix this for us and my husband have a job." Other participants discussed volunteer work in their children's schools, or at various other places to improve their English skills. However, most participants expressed that they did not have time to become involved in their community, as they were trying to settle down in a new, foreign country.

Recognition

Respect and tolerance. According to Jenson (1998), recognition is defined as the acknowledgment of diversity and respect of differences. Throughout the interviews, some participants identified examples of recognition through their experiences of respect and tolerance with Canadians. One participant explained that "no one here in Canada tell you that you are Syrian." Another participant stated, "They respect us and we respect them." Others identified Canadians as "kind," "polite," "supportive," "welcome," and

“even if they saw us at the door, they are going to help us.” Another example of respect was seen through the use of interpreters, as was explained in the *Participation* section.

However, not all participants were respected by Canadians upon their arrival to Canada. In the *Belonging* section, there was mention of one participant having a negative experience with their housing manager, of whom they pejoratively referred to as ‘Saddam Hussein’. In this situation, there was no respect held for the refugees, as they were required to ask permission before leaving the home, and she kept all of the doors and windows locked. The participants described this experience as living in a “prison,” which was a shock to their system upon arrival to Canada. Other relationships with landlords also lacked respect when the landlord ignored or was rude to refugees. One participant described the difference in treatment as “Canadian families are treated in a dignified manner and we are not.”

Although some participants reported negative experiences with Canadians, these negative experiences were isolated to landlords. No participants reported experiencing discrimination or a lack of respect from other Canadians. In being asked if they recommend other Syrian refugees come to Canada, one participant exclaimed:

The best living is here in Canada, the best people here, there is no racism, they should come and they will enjoy. The people here are very kind and there are a lot of Arabic speaking people here and so, already advised them.

Legitimacy

Legitimacy is defined as having confidence in public institutions such as advocacy groups, political parties, and governments to protect one’s rights (Spoonley et al., 2005). There are several constructs that were identified as constituting legitimacy,

such as systemic obstacles, refugee support services, and the opinions that refugees have on Canadian law and government.

Systemic obstacles. The two most common frustrations that the study participants have experienced since coming to Canada were inadequate housing and inadequate income. Upon being asked whether they would still choose to come to Canada if they had the choice, one participant stated, “No, we would not have come to Canada, we do not want to be here and we have to stay here for five years ...the housing is small and we don't get enough money.” Many participants expressed similar dissatisfaction in being forced to live in small, inaccessible units—as was previously described in the *Participation* section. However, when discussing the lack of apartment choice upon arrival to Canada, one participant did acknowledge that this was likely due to the large number of refugees accepted simultaneously, and the subsequent pressure on settlement agencies to move people out of the hotels. Nevertheless, participants were also unsure of when they would be able to move to a nicer home, due to the expensive housing market.

The general consensus among participants in regards to their financial status was that they are simply not getting enough money through their financial assistance program. Some participants expressed dissatisfaction in knowing that families with more kids get more money, claiming, “it was not an equitable distribution of money.” One participant stated that all families should receive the same amount of money, regardless of family size. When talking about plans to improve quality of life, one family expressed the need to buy a car since their apartment is not in a central location and accessing services—such as their local grocery store—takes two buses. This family has been trying to save \$2000 over the past seven months but has been unable to save anything due to their limited monthly budget. The family claimed, “We can't seem to save enough when we

aren't getting enough to begin with." As previously mentioned, many participants expressed a desire to obtain employment to improve their financial situation, but the language barrier has prevented them from doing so.

Participants also discussed their desire to reunite their families by bringing remaining members over to Canada. However, participants explained that they were either unsure of how to do so, or that it was a complicated and potentially expensive process. Despite the systemic obstacles that refugees have experienced, they prioritized expressions of gratitude. One participant exclaimed, "God bless Canada. They did for us what—they did for us a great thing. No other country did this for us. Thank you. Thank you."

Canadian law and government. Legitimacy can be enshrined in laws, policies, and programs. When asked about how pleased they were with the Canadian government, one participant exclaimed:

We are very thankful to the Canadian government. He would like to thank all the government, all the employee, even the Canadian people. They are very kind.

They provide us with things. We never see it in our country. They didn't provide this help for us like the Canadian government.

Another participant discussed the differences between laws in Canada and Syria, stating that in Syria, everything was taken by word of mouth. But in Canada, commitments were dependent on "paper, signature, and time." The same participant added, "I like this, the law is better, the law is good, protecting us. The best thing here in Canada, there's no bias, everyone is the same."

Throughout the interviews, the positive and negative experiences shared by participants help to illustrate the constructs that underpin Jenson's (1998) dimensions of

social cohesion. Positively, participants expressed the most gratitude for the kindness they have received from Canadians, as well as the help they have received to access services. Discrimination was a factor that influenced each dimension. In this study, only three participants stated that they were discriminated against, and it was from their landlords or social service workers. Because the participants did not experience discrimination from the broader Canadian society, it helped them feel welcomed into their community. On the other hand, the three participants that were discriminated against described poorer resettlement experiences. Another concern that arose among participants was the language barrier, which negatively affected all dimensions. There were also experiences that overlapped in dimensions—such as access to interpretation impacting both participation and recognition, or inadequate and expensive housing falling under both inclusion and legitimacy dimensions. Overall, participants explicated elements of all five dimensions of social cohesion within their first year of settlement in Canada.

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to explore Syrian refugees' experiences of social cohesion within their first year of resettlement in a mid-sized Canadian city, through the application of Jenson's (1998) framework. Study findings were used to illustrate the multiple and interrelated factors that impacted *belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition* and *legitimacy*. Furthermore, this study provided a voice to the perspectives and experiences of refugees and the barriers they faced while trying to resettle into their new communities.

The subsequent section will discuss the findings found throughout this study and relate them to the *Welcoming Communities—A Toolkit for Municipal Governments* report that was mentioned above. The purpose of this report was to provide Canadian

municipalities with guidance in their refugee resettlement efforts (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2016a; Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2016b). General actions included: *Create a welcoming environment, share information and coordinate services, support front lines, find safe, affordable, and appropriate housing, provide cultural education, promote access to community services, create connections and support integration*, and to *advocate for more welcoming communities*. This study found that certain actions—such as *creating a welcoming environment, promoting access to community services, and creating connections and supporting integration*—were more supported than others.

According to the literature, refugees are at risk for social exclusion as a result of a lack of services (Galabuzi, 2006; Stewart et al., 2008; Toye, 2007). However, results from this study provide a more nuanced understanding of this perspective. Participants expressed gratitude for the workshops that were offered by the settlement agency upon their arrival to Canada, as they helped to teach them about Canadian culture, and how to access various services. Furthermore, all participants had access to education, as well as healthcare services—with the exception of mental health care. These findings indicate that the city of study has made an effort to *provide cultural education, create connections to support integration* as well as *share information and promote access to community services*. However, although services were made available, some participants still were not utilizing them. For example, some participants pointed out that they were not attending English classes due to illness, family obligations, transportation issues, or simply feeling as if they did not have time. Therefore, the issue is not simply the existence of services, but rather, accessibility of these services.

According to Jenson (2010), social cohesion is a factor that may contribute to the development of personal well-being and subsequent societal health, social capital and economic development (Stansfeld, 2006). Through research efforts conducted by the PRI (2005), the GoC discovered that positive intercultural contact is a critical component in promoting social cohesion. Furthermore, without social connections, an individual is at increased risk for various mental health disorders (Stansfeld, 2006). Throughout this study, participants discussed many positive intercultural relations they have experienced since coming to Canada. Many participants expressed gratitude for the kindness they have received, whether it was a smile from a stranger, or a welcoming hello from a neighbour. The *welcoming environment* that participants have experienced since their arrival has helped them to develop a sense of national pride and a desire to integrate into Canada, with most expressing that Canada is, or will someday become, home. However, it is important to note that participants exclamation of Canada as home may have been influenced by their desire to be perceived as grateful to Canada in front of Canadian researchers. Furthermore, the concept of home may have different meanings for each individual. The literature has found 'home to be a multidimensional concept, based on one's experience of a psychological space of safety, connections with family, and a geographical-emotional connection (Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010). In addition, participants were limited in developing positive and meaningful intercultural relationships due to the language barrier, cultural unease, as well as homesickness and feeling as if they were "between two fires." During the interviews, every participant expressed frustration with the English language barrier. In addition, one participant expressed feelings of cultural unease, as they were nervous to utilize, for example, particular services of the Salvation Army because it was "military sounding" and made

them fear for their safety. According to Wahoush (2007), if social and cultural supports are made available to refugees, but are not sensitive to their beliefs and norms, then they may not feel comfortable accessing such resources, thereby threatening personal well-being. Although the *Welcoming Communities* toolkit aimed to provide education on both Canadian, as well as Syrian culture, there is room for improvement. As a result of these issues, it can be perceived that the development of social capital may be bound by language, cultural insensitivity, and internal conflict.

According to the literature, xenophobic responses towards newcomers—as evidenced through discrimination—may threaten social cohesion and economic prosperity (Galabuzi, 2006; McCoy, Kirova, & Knight, 2016; Policy Research Initiative, 2005; Strategic Comments, 2017; Toye, 2007). Throughout this study, negative effects of discrimination were identified across all five dimensions of social cohesion. Although participants did not explicitly state that they felt discriminated against, they did describe challenges they faced with housing and communicating with their social service workers. For example, some participants explained that they were frustrated with landlords ignoring their requests to address housing issues, or the rude responses they received when trying to initiate a conversation, when they saw Canadian families being treated kindly by the same landlord. Furthermore, when they approached social services workers for help on how to effectively communicate or utilize services, some participants also experienced rude or absent responses. Within the Canadian ethnographic inquiry study conducted by Stewart et al. (2008), experiencing unfriendly attitudes and unequal housing opportunities on account of refugee status was described as discrimination. Such negativity did not create a *welcoming environment* for participants in the present study, and instead contributed to residential instability and social exclusion.

Language barriers are another factor that can lead to social exclusion (Galabuzi, 2006; Toye, 2007). Because they were unable to communicate effectively in English, many participants faced unemployment, inadequate housing accommodations, and social isolation. However, participants did express that interpreters were available at their children's schools, and one participant stated they had an interpreter present for a job interview, which helped to *promote access* and *support integration* among refugees. Furthermore, the language barrier is an issue that may be solved in time, after participation in English classes. Interestingly, having access to English classes was one factor expressed by study participants that did not agree with the literature. According to Stewart and colleagues' (2008) ethnographic inquiry that explored the types and adequacy of formal supports for refugees in Canada, refugees may face long wait times for access to English classes. This finding was not expressed in the current study. However, this study did find barriers to participation in classes. Some participants stated that they were not participating in classes, due to physical or mental illness, family obligations, or generally feeling like they did not have time to learn English while trying to settle down in a new, foreign country. These problems were further implicated within transportation issues, as several families reported that they did not own a car, and public transportation was not easily accessible from their apartments. Therefore, in the present study, to the presence or absence of English classes was not the issue, but rather having the opportunity to maintain attendance at these classes.

Inadequate funding is another barrier that has been highlighted throughout the literature as a systemic obstacle facing Canadian refugees (Francis, 2010; Francis & Heibert, 2014; Murdie, 2008; Stewart et al., 2008). Throughout the study, participants explained that the funds they receive on social assistance are simply not enough to

support their families. Although inadequate social assistance funding is an issue among all individuals in Canada, the financial instability that refugees experience is further implicated within the barriers they face when trying to obtain employment (Beland & Daigneault, 2015). Throughout this study—as well as the literature—language barriers, non-recognition of qualifications, and limited access to transportation all prevent refugees from obtaining employment (Fozdar, 2012; Galabuzi, 2006; Reitz & Banerjee, 2007; Toye, 2007). Participants also explained that they would like to relocate to a larger city with more job opportunities but were unable to afford the move. Therefore, they were stuck living in the apartment given to them, in a city that offered minimal employment opportunities in their field of work. Therefore, there is a need to address the financial instability of refugees in Canada, through examining the allocation of social assistance funding, as well as barriers to employment.

Although participants were provided with affordable housing upon arrival to Canada, several described this housing as inadequate. Housing issues ranged from flooding, to cockroaches, to bedbugs, to wheelchair inaccessibility, and insufficient space including most often the limited number of bedrooms. In addition to having communication issues with landlords, having access to adequate housing may also be implicated within Canada's expensive market. Many of the above issues have the potential to be resolved by actions taken by the landlord, except for the size and location of the apartment. Upon arrival to Canada, participants in this study were all given two-bedroom apartments, regardless of family size. Oftentimes these apartments were not located in a central location, or in an area with easy access to public transportation. Because of this, families found themselves putting multiple children in one bedroom, or making sleeping arrangements in the living room. Families expressed a desire to move,

but they could not do so because of the unaffordability of housing. Although the *Welcoming Communities* toolkit outlined *safe, affordable, and appropriate housing* as a target for incoming refugees, it is clear that this goal needs improvement in practice.

Limitations

This study has contributed to the limited research on refugees' experiences with social cohesion. Furthermore, this is only the second study that has explored the concept of social cohesion among refugees, from their personal perspectives and experiences. In addition, it is the only study of its kind that has been conducted within Canada. However, there are various limitations to study findings. Firstly, purposive sampling from one settlement agency may have impacted study results, since the opinions of Syrian refugees who chose not to participate in the study, or who were resettled through another agency, were not included.

There are also potential epistemological issues to using a secondary analysis. The first is *data fit*, which refers to whether or not pre-existing data may be used for purposes other than why it was originally collected. Since the purpose of the original study was to evaluate the impact of tenant and landlord education on health, housing stability, and social inclusion of Syrian refugees in a mid-sized Canadian city, this study was limited by the original interview questions (see Appendix C). The second issue is not having *been there*, which refers to the secondary analyst's ability to interpret the data. Since qualitative analysis is characterized by being able to describe participants' experiences within their social context, not being there for the primary data collection is another limitation of this study (Bryman, 1988; Corti, 1999; Thompson, 2000). The dependability of the findings may also be threatened because the definitions in Jenson's (1998)

framework were not mutually exclusive. Therefore, coding was subjectively conducted based on the researcher's interpretation of each dimension's definition.

Furthermore, even though utilizing a directed approach helped to structure the analysis, this approach may present with challenges to allowing meaning to arise from the voices of the participants. Because a pre-existing theory or framework is used to guide analysis, researchers may be more likely to find evidence that is supportive of a theory, as opposed to unsupportive (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Furthermore, overemphasizing a theory may blind researchers to the context of study findings. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), these limitations may be attributed to neutrality being parallel to the concept of objectivity. However, triangulation, an audit trail, and reflexive journaling were all strategies used to limit the narrow-sightedness of results in this study.

Because this study interviewed refugees during their first year of resettlement, it was also difficult to conduct an in-depth exploration of all aspects of social cohesion as participants were focused on obtaining adequate housing, employment, and learning the English language. As such, studying refugees during their first year in Canada may have prevented an in-depth exploration of certain aspects of dimensions—such as their degree of political involvement as an example of *legitimacy*.

Conclusion

The findings from this study augment existing research in social cohesion by providing a description of Syrian refugees' resettlement experiences in a Canadian setting. Many participants expressed a desire to integrate into Canada through learning the English language, befriending Canadians, and obtaining housing and employment. Clearly, study participants utilized the support programs offered by the city of study. The city recognized that an influx of new refugees would place a strain on social services

within the community and took immediate action to invest organizational funds, as well as donor funds into areas of need (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2016b).

Although valuable services are currently being offered to Syrian refugees, there is a need to expand these services, as well as develop additional programs and policies to assist Syrian refugees in Canada to achieve social cohesion. In order to become a cohesive society, Canadians will have to overcome societal fragmentation and work to reduce inequalities and discriminatory attitudes (Jenson, 1998; Jenson, 2010, PRI, 2005; Putnam, 2007; United Nations, 2016). Future research is needed to conduct long-term perceptions of social cohesion, through studying refugees who have been in Canada for more than one year. There is also a need to develop policies and programs surrounding social assistance funding, providing affordable, safe, and sizeable housing, employment opportunities, English language classes, access to mental health services, as well as promoting intercultural interactions.

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CHAPTER III

IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this secondary analysis was to explore Syrian refugees' experiences of social cohesion within their first year of resettlement in a mid-sized Canadian city, through the application of Jenson's (1998) framework of the five dimensions of social cohesion—*belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, and legitimacy*. A supplementary analysis was conducted on the data from the *Housing Education for Syrian Refugees and their Landlords: An Evaluation of the Impact on Health, Housing Stability and Social Inclusion*. This primary project evaluated the impact of tenant and landlord education on self-rated health, housing stability, and social inclusion for government-assisted Syrian refugees in an urban area in Canada (Oudshoorn, Meyer, & Benbow, unpublished). Secondary analysis of interview data using Jenson's (1998) framework revealed various barriers that were experienced by Syrian refugees as they resettled into their new communities. The largest social cohesion needs expressed by participants included the desire to integrate into Canada through learning the English language, befriending Canadians, and obtaining housing and employment. The findings from this study illustrate the multidimensional nature of social cohesion, particular needs of Syrian refugees, as well as highlighting key areas for future policy development, and implications for nursing practice, education, and research.

Implications for Policy

According to Jenson (2010), goals of policy efforts should be to help vulnerable populations—such as refugees—to overcome disadvantage and achieve cohesion. As such, future refugee policy should focus on protecting social rights and promoting economic inclusion. Some opportunities for policy development that arose from this

study included themes related to housing, such as *housing adequacy* and *choice of housing*. Financial obstacles were also identified as an important area for policy development, within the *income and employment barriers* theme. Yet another area for policy advancement was identified through participants' descriptions of not utilizing available services. Underutilization of services was explained within the *education, health access, empowered to speak, and community involvement* themes. Inadequacies in housing and finances, as well as opportunities to utilize services were also identified within the *systemic obstacles* theme. Opportunities for policy development of the above issues will be subsequently described, as well as the nursing role in advocating for the development of inclusive policies.

Providing Affordable, Safe, and Suitable Housing

In Canada, having access to housing is a fundamental human right (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2006). In fact, under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), all persons have the right to *adequate, affordable, and suitable* housing (n.d.). Adequate housing refers to dwellings that do not require “any major repairs” (CMHC, n.d.). Affordable housing should cost “less than 30% of total before tax household income” (CMHC, n.d.). Suitable housing needs to abide by the *Canadian National Occupancy Standard*, which states that one bedroom is required for each person in the household, unless they are an adult couple, two children of the same-sex who are under 18 years old, or two children of opposite-sex who are under five years old (CMHC, n.d.). According to the CMHC (n.d.), a household is in “core housing need” if they meet at least one of the above criteria. The Housing in Canada Online (HiCO) database profiles housing conditions of households according to Aboriginal status, household type, tenure, and age group (CMHC, n.d.). Since the 1990's, research into core housing needs

have been used to help guide social housing policy development and allocate funding according to location (CMHC, n.d.).

Although effort is being made to provide appropriate housing throughout Canada, most Syrian refugees within this study are in core housing need, as was identified within the *housing adequacy* theme. Of note is that while households are categorized based on Aboriginal status, other statuses—such as being a refugee—are not taken into account (CMHC, n.d.). One suggestion is to begin profiling households according to refugee status. This would allow government and non-government housing stakeholders to identify the specific needs of refugee households and directly allocate resources to address these problems. Monitoring the core housing need of refugees could also be used to monitor progress in housing conditions. Making this small change to the HiCO profiling could be a first step in developing the knowledge needed to promote refugees' rights to adequate, affordable, and suitable housing.

Furthermore, according to the *Human Rights Code* (1990), all individuals have the right to equal housing treatment, which is free from discrimination and harassment. Although participants have the right to seek help from the Landlord and Tenant Board to solve disputes, participants may be unsure of how to utilize this service. Although resettlement agencies in the city of study do offer landlord and tenant information sessions, discriminatory actions from landlords need to be monitored more closely, and landlords should be reprimanded for violating tenant's discrimination rights. Perhaps resettlement agencies can begin periodically following up with refugees about their housing situations and provide guidance on how to enact their rights.

Fostering Financial Inclusion

Government assisted refugees (GARs) receive financial assistance from the federal government through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) (Government of Canada [GoC], 2018). The RAP lasts for a period of one year, and is only received if refugees do not have their own source of income (GoC, 2018). The monthly salary is based on family size and provincial social assistance rates (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2018; GoC, 2018). It is expected that the GoC provide enough support to GARs to meet their basic needs and achieve the UNHCRs (2016) goal of allowing refugees to rebuild their lives with dignity. Based on the findings within the *income and employment* theme of this study, living off RAP funding alone is not enough, as families are struggling to meet their basic needs. However, this finding is not new. According to an evaluation of resettlement programs conducted by the GoC (2016), RAP funding is insufficient to even support the basic housing needs of GARs. Furthermore, RAP support falls below the Low-Income Cut Off rate for all major cities across Canada. According to the GoC (2016), these findings have been raised previously in the Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) evaluations and audit reports. The GoC (2016) has recommended that the IRCC should develop policy to ensure GARs are provided with an adequate level of financial support to meet their resettlement needs and support integration. Although the IRCC agrees with the recommendation, they also acknowledge the fiscal restraints associated with increasing income support for refugees (GoC, 2016).

Insufficient funding is a clear issue GARs are facing that has yet to be addressed. However, the GoC (2016) is aware of this issue and is working on developing future policy. Given that RAP funding is related to social assistance rates, any future policy development should encourage provincial assistance rates be increased to reflect the true

costs of living within each respective province. Besides creating policies that directly address financial inclusion, there are other indirect suggestions that can be made to improve current conditions. Such suggestions include developing policy to promote opportunity for integration.

Promoting Opportunity

It is clear that the city of discussion has provided a variety of supports for incoming Syrian refugees, including mental health services, English language classes, as well as translation and employment services. Despite the availability of these resources, there are systemic obstacles preventing Syrian refugees from effectively utilizing them. For example, within the *education, health access, empowered to speak, and community involvement* themes, several participants stated that they were not attending English classes due to physical or mental illness, family obligations, or generally feeling like they did not have time to learn English while trying to settle down in a new, foreign country. These problems were further implicated within transportation issues, as several families reported that they did not own a car, and public transportation was not easily accessible from their apartments. Moving forward, more support is needed to connect the realities of the lives of refugees with the design of services to support them. This could include embedding inclusion of refugees into development processes of services and supports. This intentional consultation would address the *able to be heard* theme from our findings. According to the Canadian Council for Refugees (2011), the process of integration must involve both the newcomer and receiving society. Furthermore, encouraging refugee self-representation supports the “nothing about us without us” movement whereby refugees are able to personally identify their barriers to participation and utilization of available services (Refugee Council of Australia, 2017). Although key informant groups already

exist within resettlement agencies in the city of study, ensuring that there is representation of all key stakeholders—from employees/volunteers within the resettlement agency, to members of local government, refugees, frontline workers and landlords—will help agencies understand each stakeholder’s resettlement experience, while also identifying the unique needs of refugee populations. Promoting discussion among these individuals could help to improve the utilization of services needed to promote integration and subsequent cohesion.

Advocating for Policy Advancement

According to *The Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses*, nurses are required to challenge policies that negatively impact the social determinants of health of vulnerable populations (CNA, 2017). Therefore, nurses need to advocate for affordable, safe and suitable housing, an increase in RAP and provincial financial assistance rates to reflect the true costs of living, as well as the inclusion of refugees into development processes of services and supports.

In order to protect refugee health, nurses should utilize their professional associations to develop a voice for their concerns. For example, in 2012, the federal government announced that it was making cuts to the Interim Federal Health (IFHP) Program—which was a national health insurance program for refugees in Canada (Registered Nurse’ Association of Ontario [RNAO], n.d.). Cutting this program would have reduced the quality of healthcare coverage for refugees (RNAO, n.d.). In order to protect the health of refugees, the RNAO advocated for the reinstatement of this program (RNAO, n.d.). Through grassroots protests, writing letters, and meeting with politicians, the RNAO was able to provide evidence to the Federal Court of Canada, as well as the incoming Liberal government to restore the IFHP Program (RNAO, n.d.). Nurses have a

strong and influential voice that should be utilized to promote ethical and fair opportunities.

Implications for Nursing Practice

Nurses across all healthcare settings provide care for refugees. According to the Canadian Nurses' Association (CNA), nurses are ethically required to provide compassionate care to patients regardless of gender, age, religion, socioeconomic or residency status (CNA, 2017). Because of the frequent contact that nurses may have with refugees, findings from this study may have several implications for nursing practice and advocacy efforts.

Coordinating Services

According to the CNA, the social determinants of health (SDoH) have a significant impact on one's predisposition to illness (CNA, 2018). Furthermore, personal circumstances are shaped by the distribution of resources across both global and local levels (CNA, 2018). Findings from this study have demonstrated inclusion needs of Syrian refugees, as identified through various themes that include *barriers to income and employment, housing adequacy*, as well as *access to healthcare and education*. As frontline healthcare workers, nurses are in a unique position to help connect refugees to the services they need. Therefore, while assessing a patient who is a refugee, it is critical that nurses develop a supportive relationship, examine their personal SDoH, and identify needs. After needs are identified, nurses should subsequently coordinate referral or recommendation to the appropriate services. If such services are unavailable, nurses should then follow-up with the respective program or organization, to advocate for increased availability. According to the *Welcoming Communities—A Toolkit for Municipal Governments*, interdisciplinary communication must be utilized to *share*

information and coordinate services, as well as to *support front lines* (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2016b). If nurses are able to establish effective communication channels with resettlement agencies and other organizations engaged in resettlement efforts, they may be able to help Syrian refugees receive needed services. This also requires nurses to be educated on the services available in their communities.

Practicing Non-discriminatory, Compassionate Care

Parts of refugees' experiences of belonging are impacted by the care they receive from HCPs, as evidenced within this study through the theme of *discrimination* (Beiser, 2005). In order to promote non-discriminatory, compassionate care in the workplace, the RNAO (2007) recommends nurses develop self-awareness, strong communication skills, and acquire new learning. To encourage self-awareness, nurses should reflect on individual values and beliefs, express awareness of these personal views, and continuously reflect on how one's personal feelings and biases may affect others (RNAO, 2007). Being aware of one's preferred communication style, as well as a patient's communication style, may help nurses to identify communication gaps (RNAO, 2007). Nurses should also utilize a variety of communication skills, including active listening, reflecting, and non-judgemental, open-ended questioning (RNAO, 2007). Furthermore, the best way to learn about a patient's culture and how it may impact their health is to ask the patients themselves. Within the acute care setting, perhaps the most important responsibility of nurses in promoting effective communication is to advocate for translation services when needed. Although the findings from this study highlight that translation services were available in many healthcare settings, not every organization may have this resource available. Outside of acute care, it is important for nurses to

continue to ask refugees about relevant cultural beliefs and practices. Obtaining this knowledge will help nurses to advocate for appropriate treatments and services.

To promote cultural understanding, nurses must also strive to acquire new knowledge of various cultural norms, values, and beliefs (RNAO, 2007). But before doing so, it is vital that culture be viewed as a relational process that changes throughout time and personal experience (Gray & Thomas, 2006). Historically, culture has been defined as the learned and shared values and beliefs that guide behaviour and shape meaning among a group of people, which promotes an essentialist perspective (Racher & Annis, 2007). Shifting the definition of culture from an essentialist to a constructivist understanding will help nurses to promote cultural safety, which is defined as the ability to recognize the effects that socio-political status may have on one's beliefs, attitudes, practices, and potential biases (Bozorgzad, Negarandeh, Raiesifar, & Poortaghi, 2016). Learning cultural safety therefore allows one to understand power differentials and health inequities within their healthcare system (Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, 2009). Although the findings from this study was not focused on nurses' understanding of culture, it is proposed that maintaining a constructivist understanding within practice, as well as during participation in key informant groups—which was previously suggested within the *Promoting Opportunity* subsection of *Implications for Policy*—will help nurses to advocate for means to promote integration and subsequent cohesion of refugees.

In order to provide compassionate care, it is essential that nurses exercise empathy, reassurance, and advocacy in order to help refugees access resources that will positively impact their SDoH (Pottie, Greenaway, Hassan, Hui, & Kirmayer, 2016). If nurses advocate for the healthcare needs of refugees, including rights to safe housing and translation services, it will result in protective health effects (Pottie et al., 2016).

Furthermore, advocating for the health and well-being of Syrian refugees may help to improve public awareness and eliminate misconceptions about refugees in Canada.

Implications for Nursing Education

According to the International Council of Nurses (2014), advocacy, promotion of safe environments, as well as helping to shape health policy throughout patient and health systems management are all key nursing roles. To support a future generation of nurses who understand their professional responsibilities, it is essential that nursing programs emphasize these concepts within their curricula. Although many nursing programs currently emphasize these concepts in third and fourth year (Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing, 2018; Ingram School of Nursing, 2018; Laurentian University, 2018; The University of British Columbia, 2018), Ryerson University (2018) has a first year course on these issues. In their *Social, Political, and Economic Perspectives* course, first year nursing students are able to learn about how current issues and policies are affecting the delivery of health care, as well as the ethical and legal responsibilities of nurses (Ryerson, 2018). Like many other nursing curricula, Ryerson also emphasizes leadership, policy, and advocacy responsibilities in upper year courses (Ryerson, 2018). Although nursing programs throughout Canada are discussing health policy and advocacy responsibilities throughout several of their courses, introducing a first-year health policy course that promotes social, political and economic change in healthcare could help to highlight the fundamental nature of policy advocacy in the profession.

In addition to introducing courses related to health policy and advocating for safe, inclusive environments, nursing curricula may also benefit from placing further emphasis on cultural diversity. Cultural competence and safety were concepts previously mentioned within the *Implications for Nursing Practice* section. In order to promote a

future generation of nurses who are able to practice cultural safety, this concept must be incorporated throughout nursing curricula. Many nursing programs currently integrate cultural competence, sensitivity and/or safety to some extent (Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing, 2018; Ingram School of Nursing, 2018; Laurentian University, 2018; Ryerson University, 2018; The University of British Columbia, 2018), however it is important to discuss all three concepts, and the differences between them. Nursing curricula that help students understand the limitations of an essentialist view of culture will promote the development of nurses who are able to recognize inequitable healthcare and advocate for change (Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, 2009).

Implications for Nursing Research

Overall, all five dimensions of Jenson's social cohesion theory were addressed within this study. However, some dimensions—such as *recognition* and *legitimacy*—were discussed in less detail. Because this study only explored short-term perceptions of social cohesion, it was difficult for participants to assess whether they received societal recognition, as well as their confidence in Canadian institutions—such as advocacy groups and the government—to protect their rights. Therefore, further research is needed to examine the long-term perceptions of social cohesion among refugees who have been in Canada for more than one year. Refugee experiences in other countries should also be explored, as the results of this study may not be applicable outside of the Canadian context.

In addition to conducting future studies that explore the long-term perceptions of social cohesion, revising Jenson's framework to create more rigorous definitions could help to improve the dependability of findings in future studies. Furthermore, merging *recognition* and *legitimacy* could help to provide a more in-depth understanding of Syrian

refugees' experiences of social cohesion. According to Jenson (1998), *recognition* is defined as the acknowledgement of diversity and respect of differences. Findings from this study, as well as previous research, have found that several factors that affect recognition also affect multiple dimensions—such as failing to recognize foreign credentials, discrimination, and language barriers (Spoonley et al., 2005). These same factors may also influence one's perception of *legitimacy*, as defined as having confidence in public institutions to protect one's rights (Jenson, 1998; Spoonley et al., 2005). Since many of the same factors affect both recognition and legitimacy, merging the two into the legitimacy dimension could allow researchers to conduct a more succinct analysis of how public institutions are protecting the rights of diverse populations, while also respecting differences. Future research using Jenson's (1998) theory of social cohesion could be conducted using the revised four dimension model.

Conclusion

This study has described the experiences of social cohesion among a sample of Syrian refugees within their first year of resettlement in a mid-sized Canadian city. Evidence of social cohesion was found throughout all five dimensions. Participants expressed belonging when describing new friendships and the kindness they have received from the Canadian public, as well as perceived safety in their new community. Participants felt included in society because they were able to attend workshops and English classes, and had access to health services. Some participants felt empowered to speak up against inadequate housing and education, and others were provided with translators to promote communication. Most participants also described a strong sense of recognition, as Canadians respected their cultural differences and were eager to help them

settle into their new apartments. Participants also appreciated Canadian laws as a means to promote legitimacy and protect rights.

Negative experiences with social cohesion were also seen throughout all five dimensions. Barriers to belonging included lack of close Canadian friendships, as well as feeling homesick and between two fires. Participants felt excluded because of unemployment, insufficient social assistance funding, poor housing conditions, and lack of access to certain health services. Barriers to participation included lack of housing choice, as well as their inability to be heard when trying to advocate for themselves. Participants also expressed that they did not have time to become involved in their community because they were busy trying to settle down in a new country. Some participants also had negative experiences with recognition, through the disrespect received from landlords and resettlement workers. Inadequate housing and income were also significant barriers to legitimacy. Study findings also showed that language barriers and discrimination negatively affected all five dimensions of social cohesion.

Gaining an understanding of refugee resettlement experiences is one way to help understand social cohesion, as well as to inform future studies and influence the development of policies and programs (Toye, 2007). In regards to nursing practice, this study emphasizes the need for nurses to provide culturally competent, safe, and sensitive care, to help identify resettlement needs and connect them with necessary services, as well as to advocate for political change. In order to become a cohesive society, Canadians will have to overcome societal fragmentation and work to reduce inequities (Putnam, 2007).

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Appendix A

Ethics Approval



**Western
Research**

Research Ethics

**Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board
NMREB Full Board Initial Approval Notice**

Principal Investigator: Dr. Abram Oudshoorn
Department & Institution: Health Sciences\Nursing, Western University

NMREB File Number: 108680

Study Title: Housing Education for Syrian Refugees and their Landlords: An evaluation of the impact on health, housing stability and social inclusion

NMREB Initial Approval Date: February 09, 2017
NMREB Expiry Date: February 09, 2018

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

| Document Name | Comments | Version Date |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------|
| Recruitment Items | Recruitment Letter | 2017/01/05 |
| Other | Confidentiality Form for Interpreter | 2017/01/05 |
| Letter of Information & Consent | Arabic Translation - Received for Information | 2017/01/26 |
| Other | Attestation of Translation - Received for Information | 2017/02/08 |
| Western University Protocol | Received January 26, 2017 | |
| Recruitment Items | Recruitment Letter - Arabic Translation - Received for Information | |
| Letter of Information & Consent | | 2017/01/26 |
| Other | Translator's Declaration - Received for Information | 2017/01/25 |
| Instruments | Interview Guide | 2016/09/07 |

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. [REDACTED] NMREB Chair

EO: [REDACTED]

Appendix B

Housing Education for Syrian Refugees and their Landlords Project

Letter of Information and Consent

Project Title: Housing Education for Syrian Refugees and their Landlords: An evaluation of the impact on health, housing stability and social inclusion

Principal Investigators: Dr. Abe Oudshoorn and Dr. Sarah Benbow

Dear Potential Participant:

Purpose:

We are writing to invite you to participate in a research study. Researchers from Western University are evaluating the housing education programs being delivered in London, Ontario to Syrian refugees and their landlords. You are being invited to participate in this study as a Syrian Government Assisted Refugee to London, Ontario. As well, your health, housing, or social inclusion scores on the Client Support Services (CSS) structured assessment you completed with your settlement worker were either higher than average or lower than average. We will be interviewing 20 Syrian Government Assisted Refugees.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the Syrian refugee housing education programs with a focus on three potential program outcomes: health, housing stability, and social inclusion. Housing stability means the ability to obtain and maintain housing of one's choice for as long as one chooses. Social inclusion is both feeling like you belong in a community, and actually being able to participate actively in a community the way you would want to.

What will I do?

If you consent to participate in the project you will be asked to participate in a single 30-90 minute interview to talk in more details about your experiences with either choosing to participate in housing education, or choosing not to participate. You will also be asked more details about your health, housing stability, and social inclusion. You can choose where and when this interview will occur. These interviews will be audio recorded with your permission. Only the research team will have access to the interview data. You will be compensated \$20 for your participation.

There are no negative consequences with deciding not to participate or to withdraw from the study. Choosing not to participate in the research will not affect your access to any settlement services, government programs, or general assistance.

What are the risks and benefits of the study?

Discussing personal experiences of your transition to Canada may be difficult. If you are in need of support, Cross Cultural Learner Centre (CCLC) staff are available to assist through their settlement crisis support program [REDACTED]. CCLC staff can also provide referrals to other supportive services if you should require them.

We strive to ensure the confidentiality of your research-related records. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, as we may be required by law to disclose certain information to relevant authorities. Any disclosures of child abuse, suicidal ideation or homicidal ideation will be reported and addressed. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

The analysis will be de-identified. You will not be identified in any way in the research results. All identifying information will be removed from interviews. Your participation, or not, in the study will not in any way affect the services you receive through CCLC or SLNRC.

All identifiable information will be removed from interview data that is transcribed. Transcription will be done by 'Simply Transcription' services and Western work-study students. No audio files will be shared publicly. Paper copies of consent forms will be stored in a locked cabinet of the locked office of the Principal Investigator. Any transcribed qualitative data will have any identifying names or information removed during transcription. Digital data and hard copies of consent forms will be stored for 5 years post-publication. Audio-recordings and digital data will be permanently erased at 5 years post-publication. Hard copies will be shredded through Western School of Nursing's confidential shredding service.

Is the study voluntary and confidential?

The decision to participate or not is entirely voluntary and confidential. You can withdraw at any time without explanation. To do so, please contact the researchers using the contact info below. You may also request at any time prior to publication to have your interview data removed from the study. All the information collected will have any identifying information removed. A list linking your study number with your name will be kept by the researcher in a secure place, separate from your study file, which will be destroyed after 5 years.

Results of the Study

The results of the study may be published in scholarly journals, presented at national/international conferences, and shared in a report to CCLC and SLNRC.

For More Information:

Representatives of The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board or the Fanshawe College Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Human Research Ethics [REDACTED] email: [REDACTED] or Fanshawe College Research Ethics Board,

Please call Abe Oudshoorn from Western University, Arthur Labatt Family School of Nursing at [REDACTED], extension [REDACTED], or email him at [REDACTED] with questions regarding the project.

Sincerely,

Dr. Abe Oudshoorn

I have read this letter of information: _____ (initial)

Consent Form

Project Title: Housing Education for Syrian Refugees and their Landlords: An evaluation of the impact on health, housing stability and social inclusion

Principal Investigators: Dr. Abe Oudshoorn and Dr. Sarah Benbow

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to be audio-recorded: ☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that unidentifiable, direct quotes may be used in sharing the research: ☐ Yes
☐ No

Participant's Name (please print):

Participant's Signature:

Date:

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print):

Signature:

Date:

Appendix C

Housing Education for Syrian Refugees and their Landlords Project

Semi-structured Interview Guide for Focus Groups

Interview Guide – Refugee Housing

Prompt: Review Letter of Information and Consent.

Prompt: Ensure participant is head of household who completed CSS.

Prompt: Ensure participant is comfortable completing interview in English, or interpreter is present.

1. Did you participate in one of the tenant education programs offered to Syrian refugees this year?
 - a. If YES: Which program? Why did you choose to participate? What was your experience of the program? Did you learn anything new to you? Is there anything that could be improved about the program? What was the best part of the program? Would you recommend the program to other Syrian refugees?
 - b. If NO: Were you aware of the program? Why did you not participate in the program? Is there a change that would have made it more likely for you to participate?
2. How would you describe your health?
 - a. Has your health changed over the past 5 years? Has your health changed over the past year?
 - b. What makes you healthy? What makes you unhealthy?
 - c. If you could change anything about your health, what would it be?
 - d. Would you describe your current housing as “healthy”?
3. How do you feel about your current housing?
 - a. Is your housing safe? Permanent? Stable? Your choice?
 - b. Are you planning on changing housing? If YES: When? Why? Are you able to?
 - c. Will you be able to sustain your rent or mortgage payments over time?
4. Do you feel connected to a community in London?
 - a. Do you have friends and family in town?
 - b. Are you engaging in any activities for fun outside the home?
 - c. Have you experienced any discrimination?
 - d. Do you feel like London is home? If NO: Do you think London will ever feel like home? Why or why not?

Prompt: Thank participant for their time and participation.

CURRICULUM VITAE

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Name | Sara Calvert |
| Education | <p>Western University London, Ontario 2016-2018 Master of Science in Nursing (MScN)</p> <p>Western University London, Ontario 2012-2016 Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN)</p> |
| Honours and Awards | <p>Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) 2016-2017</p> <p>Deans Honour List 2012-2013, 2013-2014, 2014-2015, 2015-2016</p> <p>Parents Fund Award 2015</p> <p>Leonardo Suarez Memorial Scholarship 2014</p> <p>Global Opportunities Award 2014</p> <p>Scholarship of Excellence 2012</p> |
| Related Work Experience | <p>Registered Nurse Paediatric Critical Care Unit—London Health Sciences Center 2017-Present</p> <p>Clinical Research Assistant Lawson Health Research Institute 2017-Present</p> <p>Teaching Assistant Western University 2018</p> |
| Related Volunteer Experience | <p>Policy and Political Action Executive Network Officer Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO)—Middlesex Elgin Chapter 2018-Present</p> |

**Professional
Associations**

Member, RNAO
2018

Member, Nursing Research Interest Group (RNAO)
2018

Member, Paediatric Nursing Interest Group (RNAO)
2018

Member, Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau
International Iota Omicron Chapter
2017-Present

Member, College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO)
General Class
2016-Present